the weekly Standard

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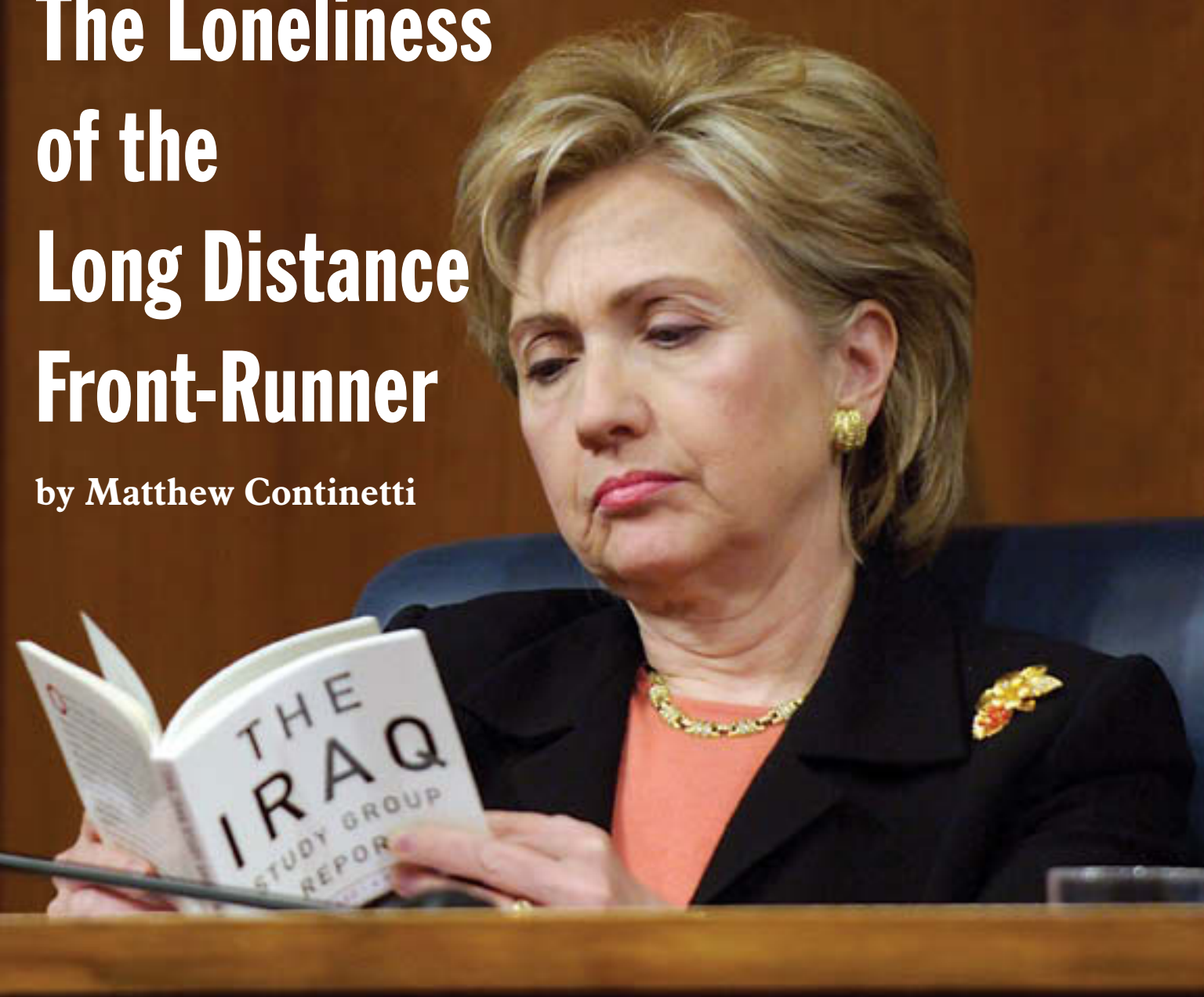
BUSH, CONGRESS, AND IRAQ

Fred Barnes • Duncan Currie
David Gelernter • William Kristol

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Front-Runner

by Matthew Continetti



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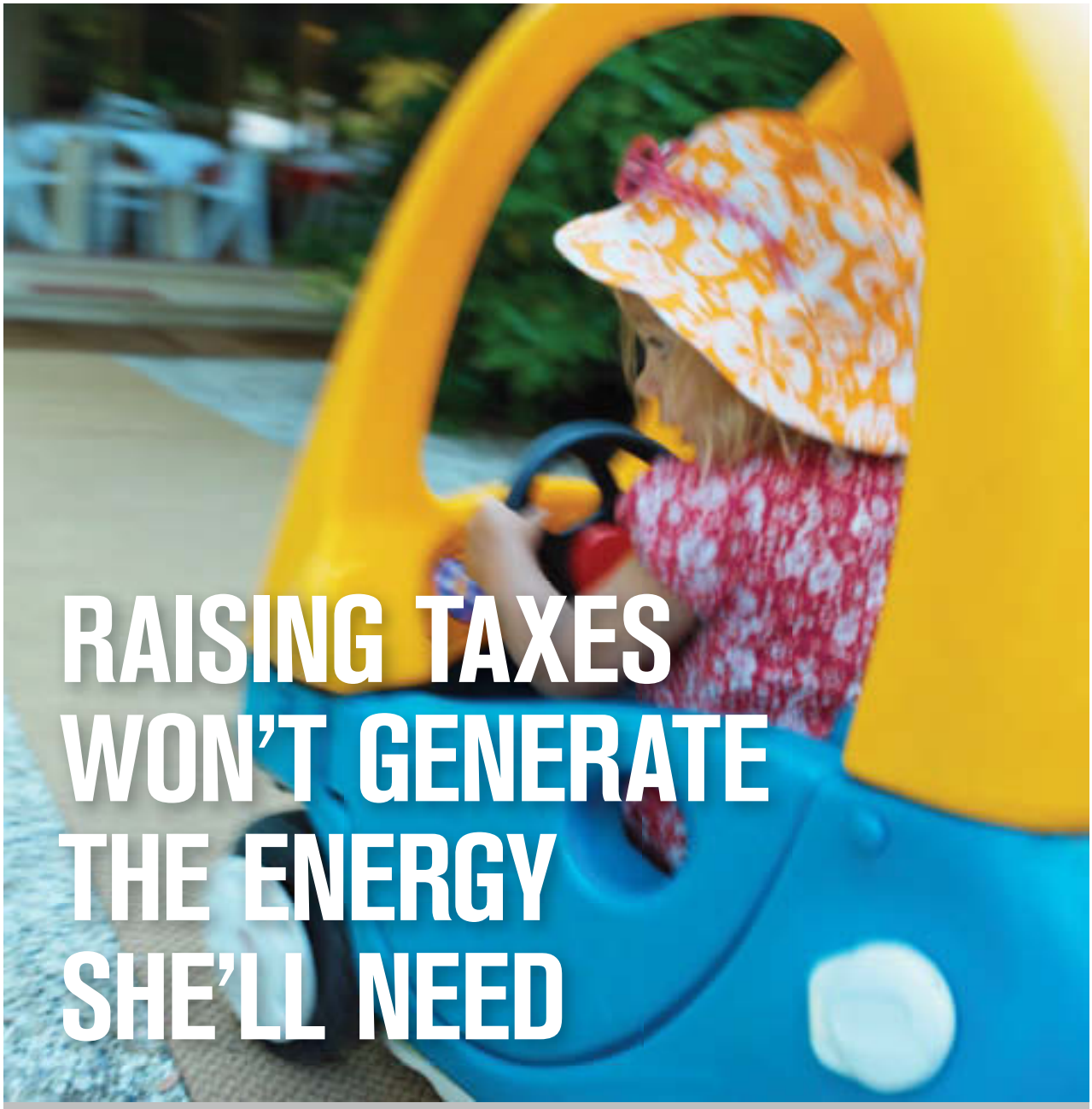

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Global Financial Warriors

The Untold Story of International Finance in the Post-9/11 World

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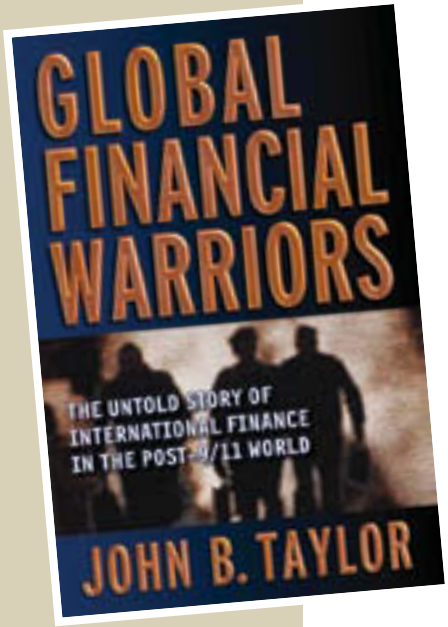

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John B. Taylor *was Treasury Under Secretary for international affairs from 2001 to 2005. A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, he is also the Mary and Robert Raymond Professor of Economics at Stanford.*

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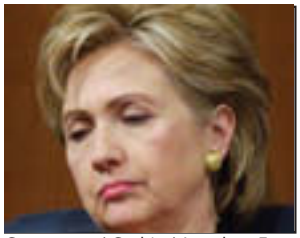

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 1941-2007

A few years back, a "basic catalog of worldviews"—a book passing in review the tenets of different philosophical outlooks, such as Christian theism, deism, existentialism, Eastern pantheistic monism, and postmodernism—was published under the title *The Universe Next Door*. It's a good title. It helps capture the inner drama of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, the distinguished historian who died this month at the age of 65: In the course of her adult life, she moved from one mental universe into another.

In the late 1970s, when she and her husband, historian of slavery Eugene Genovese, founded the journal *Marxist Perspectives*—and in 1986, when she founded the Institute for Women's Studies at Emory University—she was a secular intellectual who identified herself with feminism and leftist thought. By early 1996, when her book *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life* appeared, she had undergone a marked evolution. But the reservations that book expressed about feminism were couched in terms of common sense: "Most women," she noted, don't share the feminists' contempt for femininity or their undervaluing of marriage and motherhood. "Sensible women" are simply puzzled by feminists' strident opposition to the "mommy track," the notion that part-time or low-pressure jobs are good for many mothers in their most intensive child-rearing years.

But all the while, a deeper development of her thinking was under way. In December 1995, it led her into the Catholic church. And in the last decade of her life, it flowered in a depth of spirituality and a philosophical clarity few achieve. Several of her essays written since 2000 and posted on the web by the organization Women for Faith and Family (*www.wf-f.org*) reveal how completely she had broken with the individual-rights-based outlook dominant among her academic peers.

This later Elizabeth Fox-Genovese wrote without apology of the "transcendent purpose that should inform and guide human lives" and "the divine commandments that govern the relations among human persons and between humanity and God." "Sadly but inescapably," she wrote, "the sexual liberation of women—appropriately known as the sexual revolution—has led to the disintegration of the family, the objectification of the person, and the repudiation of all binding ties among individuals." Truth is countercultural, she came to see, and the postmodern emphasis on individual conscience is a way of sidestepping "the abiding aspects of the human condition" and the reality of evil.

With the passing of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, America has lost a courageous thinker and an elegant mind. ♦

Faculty Whining, cont.

The Scrapbook is obliged to reveal a trade secret: Sometimes we read news stories with stopwatch in hand, ticking off the minutes between the end of a story and its all-too-inevitable sequel.

Case in point: The news, revealed recently, that Southern Methodist University in Dallas is the likely location of the George W. Bush presidential library and museum, as well as a public policy institute. The institute, administered by a private foundation, would be independent of SMU, and the Bush library and museum (like all presidential libraries, except Richard Nixon's) would be under the auspices of the National Archives.

After finishing the story, we reached for our stopwatch—tick, tick, tick—and, like clockwork, the *New York Times* revealed last week that certain Southern Methodist "faculty members . . . are raising sharp questions about the school's identification with [George W. Bush's] presidency." Reported the *Times*: "About 150 of the university's 600 faculty members [expressed] a range of concerns, particularly on whether the school's academic freedom and political independence might appear compromised by an association [with the Bush library]. Thomas J. Knock, a professor of history, said the public might have trouble differentiating between the library, museum and the university."

Oh, Professor Knock, The Scrapbook assures you that the American public, despite its election of George W. Bush to the presidency, is not as stupid as all that. Even here at Scrapbook U., when we think of our traditional arm-wrestling rival Emory, in Atlanta, we don't automatically conjure up the image of Jimmy Carter—whose library, museum, and public policy institute are on the Emory campus. And when we think of John F. Kennedy, our minds don't automatically wander to the University of Massachusetts at Boston, home of the JFK library. Americans are fully capable of differentiating between presidential libraries and the institutions of higher learning that welcome them.

What they don't comprehend are academics contemptuous of their fellow citizens, and historians whose juvenile partisanship—and personal disdain for George W. Bush (B.A. Yale, MBA Harvard)—are an embarrassment to scholarship in general, and Southern Methodist University in particular. ♦

Fight, Fight . . .

As a general rule, The Scrapbook tries to ignore celebrity feuds. Careful readers will have noted our deafening silence when teen queens Hilary Duff and Lindsay Lohan went at it like two alley cats over a can of Fancy Feast. But sometimes the reverberations are so great from a clash of celebrity titans, that one must take notice. We refer to that 21st-century

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equivalent of Ali vs. Frazier, of Godzilla vs. King Kong, or perhaps more fittingly in this case of Hitler vs. Stalin—Rosie O'Donnell vs. Donald Trump.

In December, Rosie fired the first shot when "Uncle Joe" Trump, who counts the Miss USA pageant among his many classy properties, decided to give a second chance to reigning Miss USA Tara Conner, who'd engaged in underage drinking and exhibitionistic lipstick lesbian behavior. Rosie, who means it when she kisses girls, castigated Trump on *The View*, accusing the cotton-candy-haired real estate developer of having appointed himself "the moral compass for 20-year-olds in America. Donald, sit and spin my friend."

But Trump isn't into absorbing punishment. "I'm worth billions of dollars, and I have to listen to this fat slob?" he cleverly retorted. In the ensuing month, it's been all-out war. Rosie has called Trump a "pimp," a "snake-oil salesman," and a "comb-over." Trump has called her a "degenerate," a "loser," an "animal," a "terrible person," "not smart," and "very, very unattractive." Not exactly dinner at Noel Coward's.

Given the ferocity of Trump's attacks, it's a wonder Rosie hasn't already popped a cyanide capsule or, more likely, sought death by chocolate. Enter Barbara Walters, aka Mussolini. Trump intimated that Rosie's boss on *The View* had privately called him, trying to end the feud and supposedly telling him, "Don't worry, she won't be here for long," and "Donald, never get in the mud with pigs."

Walters unconvincingly denied it on the air, and, according to the *New York Post*, Rosie angrily confronted her backstage, reaming Walters for not standing up for her, and perhaps for not assisting her in the invasion of Yugoslavia. Trump wrote an open letter to Rosie (as if the publicity tapeworm writes any other kind) informing Rosie, Barbara "lied to both of us."

Now, however, Rosie and Barbara have circled their sisterhood wagons. Walters called Trump "that poor pathetic man" on the show, before an embarrassing round of high-fives. Also calling Rosie's treatment "unfair" is Madonna, or Tojo as we've come to think of her (if Tojo wore a cone bra and had a fake British accent).

While the feud looks as though it could go on for years, THE SCRAPBOOK holds out hope that it will end with an Instrument of Surrender signed on the deck of some battleship. If all the above-mentioned parties are present for the ceremony, maybe we'll get lucky and some righteous soul will torpedo it. ♦

Help Wanted

There are two openings at THE WEEKLY STANDARD. Job One: A website developer who can both manage our site and help with new projects. Our ideal candidate will be a superb techie who can code in a variety of languages. Address, résumé, and salary requirements to Catherine Lowe at *hr@weeklystandard.com*.

Job Two: We're also looking for an accounting manager—a person with the right education and experience who can work with Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable, and do bank reconciliations. Send résumé and salary requirements to Paul Weisner at *hr@weeklystandard.com*. ♦

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Casual

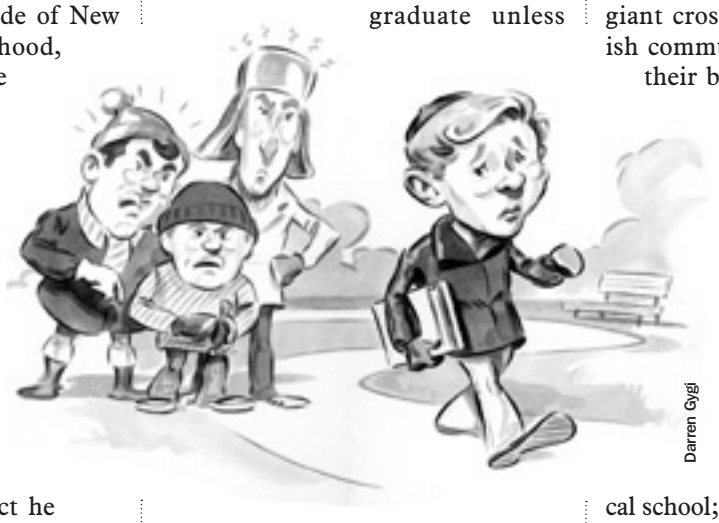
Only in America

With the holidays behind us, it is time for a paean to change in America. Those who saw a threat to social harmony in the decision to allow Wal-Mart greeters to say "Merry Christmas" after a more secular "Happy Holidays" last year, or in the various skirmishes over crèches vs. menorahs on public lawns, should reflect on how until very recently religious differences in America were marked by much, much less civility than we are used to these days.

On the Lower East Side of New York, during my childhood, holidays were when the simmering antagonisms between the children of immigrants boiled to the surface. On Jewish holidays the Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, and other kids were outraged that we Jews "got to stay home from school on our holidays as well as theirs." My father was equally outraged that the public schools would close on Christmas, an act he took to reveal the anti-Semitism of the powers-that-be.

Retaliation on the days after Jewish holidays was swift and physical. We would walk to school in groups, usually leaving early enough to reach the safety of the school building before the other kids took to the streets. So, too, on those Christian holidays when the schools remained open. Good Friday was for us a bad Friday. Collective Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ was still an unquestioned belief of Eastern European and Mediterranean Christians who lived on the opposite side of the street. To get to school from our apartment required—well, didn't actually require—passing through a park that we were told was off limits to us on those days. Some of us, as a result, felt it important to use that route, even though other routes were equally direct, and even though our teachers, fearing bloodshed, had given us permission to stay home on particularly inflammatory holidays.

Three circumstances added to the tension. First, the rise of Mussolini and Hitler led to a sudden popularity for black and brown shirts as attire for many of our neighbors. Second, there was the requirement that no boy could graduate unless he had passed a swimming test. Lessons were held at a pool in the neighborhood YMCA, and swimming was in the nude. This resulted in the exposure of a certain physical difference among the boys that served as still another provocation. The teachers' solution was to exempt the Jewish kids from the swimming requirement, which led to the third aggravating circumstance.



Darren Gygi

Rather than let us loose during the swim period, our teachers provided extra tutoring in math and other subjects. Add that to the pressures provided by Jewish parents, and you had a bunch of students far outpacing their non-Jewish classmates. The school then fanned the flames by setting up fast-track classes that further divided Jewish kids from the others, and set them on track to do very well indeed on the examinations for admission to the city's better high schools, in which Jews came to be "overrepresented," to borrow from the language of affirmative action.

In other institutions, we Jews were underrepresented. The building that was most visible on the Lower East Side was the Consolidated Edison tower, with a clock that was uniformly accepted as telling "the right time." You weren't late if you were on time by the Con Ed clock, no matter how slow that massive timepiece might actually be. On Easter and Christmas, the office lights in the Con Ed building were turned on in the shape of a giant cross, announcing to the Jewish community that they might pay their bills on time, but they had better never apply for jobs at one of the city's major employers.

Con Ed, of course, was no different from the many accounting, consulting, and Wall Street law firms that had de facto "Jews need not apply" signs on their doors. So those of my fellows who could beat the quotas went to medical school; the rest became academics, or entrepreneurs, or started law firms that have since overtaken the old white shoe crowd. Markets do work.

So fret not over minor problems like whose symbol gets displayed on the lawn in front of city hall. Or what a Wal-Mart greeter says as you shop among the output of China for a Christmas or Chanukah gift. We've come a long way, Baby, if that's all we have to worry about in this country. And if you doubt me, consider the nervousness of Jewish parents in many European countries where it is now dangerous for their children to cut through the park on their way to school.

Irwin M. Stelzer

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Warriors' Mantle

Regarding Mark Hemingway's "Warriors for Hire" (Dec. 18): First, neither Tim Spicer nor Aegis was involved, in any capacity, with Simon Mann's coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea.

Second, Aegis had and has the resources to fulfill its contract with the Department of Defense to coordinate reconstruction in Iraq. Accordingly, DoD has renewed it three years in a row.

Third, the "audit in 2005" was not "damning." Actually, the audit was in 2004, and its criticisms were largely administrative and often irrelevant. The items listed "not being performed" were excluded from the contract at the outset. The audit's two important substantive criticisms were already addressed by the time the report was published. Since then, the DoD has been entirely complimentary, and Aegis has traveled more than three million miles in Iraq without any of its clients killed or wounded.

Fourth, a U.S. Army investigation of the shootings in the "trophy videos" deemed that they were not "indiscriminate" and cleared Aegis of any wrongdoing. The edited videos were void of context and posted on the web by a disgruntled former Aegis contractor who wanted to damage the company. In reality, Aegis contractors apply tighter rules for the use of force than they are legally required to do.

Fifth, Blackwater may be a highly professional, ethical firm dedicated to providing the best possible service for its clients, but we would be surprised if any of its executives quoted thought the company had a monopoly on those qualities. Yet Hemingway says, "the larger question for Erik Prince and Blackwater has to be [. . .] how can they convince the world that they are 'committed to supporting humane democracy' when everyone else in their industry has been eager to sell it out?"

This is unfair to the whole industry, including Blackwater. MPRI built the armed forces of Balkan democracies emerging from civil war. Dyncorp is doing similar work for the newly elected president of Liberia. Global and Control Risks undertook the voter registration that made possible Afghanistan's first ever democratic elections. And Aegis's support for the U.N. made possible the referendum and general election in Iraq. Aegis not only coordinates reconstruction in Iraq on behalf of the U.S. government, but it also identifies and implements low-cost, high-impact community projects throughout Iraq, paid for by donations—including from Blackwater contractors—to the charitable Aegis Foundation.

The reality is that all of these companies—and many others—are just as committed to supporting humane democracy as Blackwater. All strive to be professional, ethical, and legitimate. In fact, Aegis is eager to see the private security industry regulated by government. Blackwater is a good outfit, and so is Aegis. Our mission is simple: to assist governments and legitimate multinational organizations with winning the war on terrorism.

Kristi M. Clemens
Executive Vice President, Aegis
Washington, D.C.

Mark Hemingway responds: As I reported, Tim Spicer was *suspected* of being involved with Simon Mann's failed coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea (Spicer, in fact, was questioned by the British government). Given Mann and Spicer's close working relationship and the questionable nature of some of Sandline's activities, it seems perfectly understandable that some suspicion would fall on Spicer.

Additionally, many of the problems raised in the Aegis audit report, released in April 2005—such as whether Aegis was properly vetting and training employees, particularly ones being given security clearances and weapons—seem to go far beyond "administrative" in nature.

Regarding Aegis's resources or lack thereof, the company was less than two years old and without a single employee in Iraq when it was awarded a $293 million PMC contract. Aegis's problems fulfilling the contract were well documented in the audit, which noted the company was short-staffed.

Finally, the so-called "trophy videos" are available on YouTube, and it sure looks to be a bunch of contractors firing into civilian vehicles without making much of an effort to warn them. As I understand it, the Army investigation simply decided further investigation of the video wasn't warranted, and that was amid public criticism that the investigation had ignored key witnesses. Even if there is some context that could explain the actions of the contractors in the video, if that kind of defensive fire is routinely necessary, it would suggest to me that Aegis needs drastically to rethink things from an operational standpoint.

• • •

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Boneless Wonders

"I remember when I was a child, being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus, which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the program which I most desired to see was the one described as 'The Boneless Wonder.' My parents judged that the spectacle would be too demoralizing and revolting for my youthful eye, and I have waited 50 years to see The Boneless Wonder—sitting on the Treasury Bench."

—Winston Churchill, January 28, 1931, in the House of Commons, referring to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald

Today, Boneless Wonders sit on the benches of both parties in Congress. More are to be found on the Democratic side of the aisle than the Republican. But the herd of Boneless Wonders these days is a bipartisan one. Let's see if we can describe their thinking.

Say you're an average congressman. How do you react to President Bush's Iraq speech? You suspect, deep down, that he's probably doing more or less what he needs to do. We can't just click our heels and get out of Iraq—the consequences would be disastrous. And the current strategy isn't working. You have said so yourself. Last fall you called for replacing Rumsfeld. You've complained that there weren't enough troops. What's more, you've heard good things about General Petraeus from colleagues with military expertise. So now Bush has fired Rumsfeld, put Petraeus in command, and sent in more troops. Maybe this new approach deserves a chance to work?

But, hey . . . look at those polls! And those op-ed pages! You didn't come to Washington to support an unpopular president conducting an unpopular war. And the Bush administration is doing a crummy job of explaining this change in strategy. The path ahead in any case is going to be tough, and the new strategy might fail. Besides, being for "escalation" sure doesn't sound good. Wasn't that a problem in Vietnam?

So you work on your talking points: You understand the president has a tough set of choices. You've got doubts about the path he's chosen. You've got lots of questions. But perhaps we should give it a chance . . .

But wait—that doesn't sound like leadership. That doesn't look decisive. And, if you're a Democrat—you didn't put in all that effort getting elected just so you could get a lot of grief from your own activists. If you're a Republican from a Democratic-leaning state—you didn't put in all those hours getting elected just so you could alienate the swing voters you need. So why not take the next step? Condemn the president's approach! There. That's a position.

But you're not just a talking head. You're a legislator. You need to vote. But on what? How about voting to disapprove of the president's "escalation"? Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi have come up with a nonbinding resolution opposing a troop increase. That's the ticket.

After all, you're not cutting off funds. You're not embracing any alternative policy. (God knows what it would be.) As Harry Reid said Thursday, "I'm not the president. It is the president's obligation to set the policy."

What's your obligation? Certainly not to take responsibility for proposing a real alternative to the president's policy. No way.

Thus, the Boneless Wonders. There are honorable exceptions, and not just among those who support the war. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) reminded his colleagues last week that "Congress is a coequal branch of government." He continued: "We have an urgent responsibility here. Congress under Article I, Section 8, has the war-making power. Congress appropriates funds for the war. Congress does not dispense with its obligation to the American people simply by opposing a troop surge in Iraq. It is simply not credible to maintain that one opposes the war, yet continues to fund it. If you oppose the war, then don't vote to fund it." Logical. But naive and quixotic, in the eyes of the Boneless Wonders.

So the Boneless Wonders will push a nonbinding resolution to, as Joe Biden put it, "demonstrate to the president he's on his own." Sure, the resolution will weaken the president's hand abroad—but that's not their problem. It will lessen the chances of success in Iraq—but that's above their pay grade. It will dispirit friends and embolden enemies—but maybe there won't be much attention paid overseas to some nonbinding congressional resolution. It will send the message to the soldiers fighting in Iraq that help is not on the way—that there are no reinforcements. That's unfortunate. But, hey—they volunteered.

And how about Sen. Obama on the *Today* show? "We're not going to babysit a civil war." To serious people that sounds juvenile. To most of his colleagues, it's a good soundbite.

It's a demoralizing and revolting spectacle.

—William Kristol

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Bush Stands Alone

Defying Congress, the press, and the Washington establishment. BY FRED BARNES

There's a simple reason the Washington establishment, Democrats, and the press hate President Bush's new strategy in Iraq: He spurned their advice. He ordered a troop increase, not the first phase of a withdrawal. He didn't echo Democrats like Senator Joe Biden and suggest the war in Iraq is lost. The thrust of his nationally televised speech last week was that we can still win. He mostly rejected the findings of the Iraq Study Group. And he refused—in fact, he's emphatically opposed—to engage Iran and Syria in talks. Nor did he go along with calls to abandon democracy as the fundamental goal of his foreign policy in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.

This was a major snub by Bush, a big-time thumbing of his nose at his critics and even at some of those who have advised him. It was the contrarian Bush in action again, much as he was in his first term—only he's less popular now. But he's still willing to go it alone as president. Republicans on Capitol Hill, normally his allies, are "nervous," a Bush aide says. "They're skittish," says another aide. Democrats, of course, are opposed to the president's plan with a fury and indignation that comes with knowing that public opinion is running their way on Iraq.

In embracing a new counterinsurgency plan in Iraq that calls for an additional 20,000-plus American troops in Baghdad and in Anbar province, Bush took a step he'd hoped to avoid. He publicly disagreed with his generals. The president is especially fond of General George Casey, the commander on the ground in raq. He invited Casey and his family to a meal at the White House last year, partly to size him up by seeing how he interacted with his wife and kids. In September, he told conservative journalists he was totally confident in Casey's advice. "If Casey is wrong, I'm wrong," he said.

The president is especially fond of General Casey, the commander on the ground in Iraq. In September, he told conservative journalists, "If Casey is wrong, I'm wrong."

Now he's decided Casey and Centcom commander John Abizaid were wrong in their reluctance to deploy more troops and change the military mission in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad. They favored a "small footprint" by American troops whose chief assignment was to train the Iraqi army to take charge. This, in turn, would allow American soldiers to begin coming home. Instead, Bush has changed to a counterinsurgency strategy with American troops more visible, more involved in combat, and assigned, first and foremost, to secure the Iraqi capital.

Historical analogies are inviting here, but the removal of Casey and Abizaid was not quite the same as President Lincoln's firing of General George McClellan in the Civil War. Casey will become Army chief of staff and Abizaid was about to retire anyway. But there is one strong similarity: Casey and Abizaid weren't winning. So Bush has brought in new commanders, notably General David Petraeus, the Army's top counterinsurgency expert. Petraeus's job is to be Bush's Ulysses Grant.

Some Republicans were disappointed in the president's speech. They wanted a rousing address that would electrify the public, spur support for victory in Iraq, and ease the war's political drain on Republicans. But Bush spoke to a camera in the White House library and, as an aide says, he "doesn't deliver good speeches in that forum. . . . There was some deflation with it." Besides, the speech was designed to explain the president's change of plans, not stir passions.

Bush was more outspoken and forceful in private sessions with more than 130 members of Congress in recent weeks and in a briefing for TV anchors on the day of the speech. Many members weren't convinced by Bush, but Mike Pence, a conservative leader among House Republicans, was persuaded to back the Bush plan. "I went in biased against a troop surge," Pence says. "What I heard was that it wasn't simply a troop surge" but also a change in strategy and the rules of engagement.

As he and other House members met with Bush in the Cabinet Room, Pence pointed to a portrait of George Washington on the wall, noting that Washington was chosen by Congress as commander in chief in the Revolutionary War and that military operations were assigned to him alone. Today, Pence said, the Constitution requires that military strategy be left to Bush. Pence quoted Bush as saying, "We don't need a plan to redeploy. . . . I want to redeploy, just not right now. We need to win. . . . I've decided not to fail. We're not going to fail."

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Chris Shays, a moderate Republican from Connecticut, needed no persuading. He took umbrage when another Republican recounted for Bush the skepticism of many of his congressional colleagues. "He took it personally," a White House official said. Shays had stuck to his support for the Iraq war during a tough reelection fight (while urging a timetable for withdrawal). "Wait a minute," the other Republican said. "I'm just passing on what I've heard." Shays is advising Republicans to stick with Bush. "We've finally got a policy that has a chance of success."

At the White House, Shays is regarded as one of what a Bush aide calls "the smart ones." These are members of Congress who survived the 2006 election when Iraq was a drag on Republicans. They understand they're free, in effect, to continue supporting the war in Iraq. The White House view is that other Republicans should feel the same.

Bush was especially vigorous in his meeting with television anchors, whom he impressed with his candor and fervor. He denounced the way Iraqis handled the execution of Saddam Hussein. That much of his off-the-record remarks became public. In that and other sessions, Bush made clear that he had told Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki in no uncertain terms that he must keep his promise to deploy the Iraqi army, as never before, against both Sunni insurgents and Shia death squads in Baghdad.

With Bush's decision to intensify the war in Iraq, a striking feature of his presidency emerges once again. He is willing to reject the conventional wisdom and endure sharp attacks for a policy he believes in. His foes regard him as stubborn to a fault and in denial about the poor prospects in Iraq. Something like that was said of Lincoln during the Civil War. Okay, Bush isn't Lincoln. But he is a president with courage and remarkable stamina, a president who, after six years, Washington still doesn't quite get. ♦

Freshmen for Peace

The newest House Democrats are as antiwar as the rest. BY DUNCAN CURRIE

The Democratic freshmen in the House are said to be a moderate bunch—by some lights even conservative. It is probably safer to call them economic populists, with a few border hawks, pro-lifers, and gun owners sprinkled here and there. Beyond basic partisanship and amorphous cries for "ethics" reform, there were two issues that united these Democrats during the 2006 campaign. The first was free trade. They're against it. Indeed, it's striking how far left the party has shifted on globalization since Bill Clinton championed NAFTA in the early 1990s. The second was the Iraq war. They're against that, too. Almost to a man the Democratic House freshmen tore into President Bush's handling of the war.

Some Republicans have comforted themselves with the thought that Democrats who won "red" districts would want to keep their distance from liberal leaders such as Nancy Pelosi and soft-pedal their criticism of Bush, should they desire a second term. While this may be true on taxes, immigration, and some cultural issues, the war in Iraq is another matter. In fact, among those House Democrats who took over Republican seats, there is almost uniform opposition to the counterinsurgency plan and troop reinforcements that Bush announced last week.

"Every freshman I've spoken with is just disgusted with this," says a Democratic House aide, who claims one of his party's freshmen mocked the Bush speech as "blabbering buffoonery." Even Joe Donnelly of Indiana, who has publicly hedged on the troop surge, is reportedly more critical in private. According to a Democratic source, Donnelly left a meeting at the White House shortly before Bush's speech believing that even some administration officials had lost confidence in our Iraq policy.

Democratic complaints take several forms. Iraq is in the throes of a civil war, they say. The only solution is political, not military. Adding over 20,000 U.S. troops will make Iraqis *more* dependent on American forces, not less. Past troop surges have not curtailed violence in Baghdad. Either way, top U.S. generals oppose the surge. Shouldn't Bush listen to his senior military advisers? Doesn't he realize his latest plan will only strain our armed forces further, and make them less capable of responding to contingencies elsewhere in the Middle East and East Asia? And whatever happened to the Iraq Study Group recommendations? Has Bush completely ignored them?

These are the typical gripes. The irony is that Democrats were once the folks advocating a bigger U.S. deployment to Iraq, citing the wisdom of such generals as former Army chief of staff Eric Shinseki. Now they've changed their tune.

The freshmen Democrats in the House are particularly curious. They ran on explicit pledges to investigate or question the administration's conduct in Iraq. As such, they might have been expected to support a new policy—but not this new policy. Most of them knocked off GOP incumbents or won previously Republican seats, but show little fear of alienating their constituents by attacking Bush on the war.

Duncan Currie is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Peter Steiner

This offers further evidence that even traditional GOP voters are souring on Iraq and itching for a U.S. withdrawal.

Even the two most conservative Democratic freshmen, Brad Ellsworth of Indiana and Heath Shuler of North Carolina, are following the party line. "He failed to convince me that sending more troops fits into a new, successful strategy," Ellsworth said of the Bush speech. "We've heard time and time again that as the Iraqis stand up, the U.S. will stand down. But we have yet to see the Iraqis take responsibility for their future. Now is the time for them to fulfill their commitment as we fulfill ours."

Shuler, the former NFL quarterback, was even more disparaging. "The president has asked us to send more of our brave young men and women into harm's away, against the advice of his generals and the Iraq Study Group," he said. "We heard a call for escalation and continuation—an escalation of the number of our troops fighting in Iraq and a continuation of the same failed policies and reckless optimism."

It's worth noting that, in the 2004 election, George W. Bush carried Ellsworth's district by 24 points (62-38) and won Shuler's district by 14 points (57-43). He carried Democrat Steve Kagen's Wisconsin district by 11 points (55-44). Kagen, though, offered an acerbic denunciation of the surge strategy: "This administration's policies make no sense. Clearly it was bad judgment to have invaded Iraq, and it will be even worse judgment if we stay. Simply put, we do not belong in Iraq, and we're still heading in the wrong direction."

Another significant group of Democratic critics includes those House freshmen who served in Iraq or otherwise boast a military background. Tim Walz of Minnesota, a retired Army national guardsman who was stationed in Italy during part of the Iraq war, called the Bush speech "showmanship at its worst." Patrick Murphy of Pennsylvania, a former Army captain and Iraq veteran, sided with "military experts like General Colin Powell and General Abizaid who say we need a political solution, not a military escalation." Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania, a former three-star Navy admiral, insisted that "the way forward is not to add more troops, but to set a deliberate timetable for redeployment from Iraq—at least by the end of this year—to serve as a catalyst for the Iraqis to accept responsibility for their country."

A third Pennsylvania freshman, Navy reservist Chris Carney, approaches Iraq from a unique vantage point: He served as a senior counterterrorism official at the Pentagon from 2002 to 2004, where he worked for Rumsfeld undersecretary Douglas Feith (a *bête noire* of the antiwar left) and collected intelligence on the relationship between al Qaeda and Baathist Iraq. "This is a Yogi Berra strategy: *déjà vu* all over again," Carney said last week of the new Bush plan. "We should be changing our focus in Iraq. Instead of sending more American troops overseas, we should be training Iraqis to handle the jobs themselves. For every Iraqi battalion we train, we need to bring an American battalion home. This should be our focus."

I spoke with Carney last Friday. "The leadership of the party," he says, "is looking to me to give some guidance on this issue." If the White House thought someone with Carney's background and avowed commitment to forging a nonpartisan Iraq strategy would give guidance sympathetic to the president's position, they were wrong. That's just one more sign of how difficult it will be for the White House to find even grudging supporters of the troop surge among Democrats on Capitol Hill. ♦

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Please Say This . . .

(Advice on the State of the Union. No charge.)

BY DAVID GELERNTER

"I have spelled out good reasons for Americans to be impatient with our war in Iraq, good reasons for us to ask more of our Iraqi allies, good reasons to change our own plans. We must fight this war the best and smartest way we can. But realism is a two-way street. So now let me tell you why I am optimistic and why I know we will win; and then let me show you the big picture.

"If the fight to topple the tyrant had dragged on for years, I might be pessimistic today. If Saddam had launched poison gas at our troops and killed thousands, that would have been a disaster. If the tyrant's foul sons had escaped to rally loyalist opposition, that would have been a serious blow. If Saddam himself had escaped to haunt the world like an evil spirit—if the eminent murderer Abu Musab al Zarqawi were still alive and free—then I might be pessimistic. If the Iraqi people had failed their two largest tests, that would have been terrible—but the election worked beautifully; the trial of Saddam Hussein was managed well under difficult circumstances. If (on the other hand) an outburst of violence had marred or derailed the election, if the trial or execution of Saddam had led to the large-scale violence so many people predicted, I might be pessimistic today.

"But I am not. Many important things have gone wrong. Those that have gone right are even more important. Under the circumstances, I owe it to our troops, our allies, our Iraqi friends, and above all to the American people to be a realist *and* an optimist. We and the Iraqi people will win in the end.

David Gelernter, a national fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

"Of course some people argue that the war itself was a mistake; that all we can hope for today is to minimize our losses and get out fast. You know their reasons. Let me give you mine for believing that we were right to go into Iraq, righter than we ever knew.

"If we hadn't, Saddam would still be writing checks to subsidize Palestinian terror against Israel; Israel would still be shadowed by Iraqi Scuds. But maybe those are not our concerns. Breakthroughs in Lebanon and Libya would never have happened; probably we would never have traced a worldwide black market in nuclear know-how to Abdul Qadeer Khan in Pakistan. Those *are* American concerns. Today we might face two Irans, not one—two America-hating tyrant regimes with their weapons programs heated to max-boil. *Those* are American concerns. Above all, how many 9/11s did we avert by showing that we would hit back and hit hard, and stand and fight for as long as it takes? Terrorists understand bullets, not baloney. U.N. resolutions don't impress them. Did we encourage 9/11 by standing down and backing off during much of the 1990s? We'll never know for sure. But a great nation must act on its best judgment, not hang back and dither, when its safety and the world's are at stake.

"Now let me show you the big picture in Iraq. This war against terror and tyrants is a war over nothing less than life and death—a war between the champions of life and the party of death. Let me explain.

"First, there is no basic difference between a tyrant like Saddam and a terrorist like bin Laden or Zarqawi. Terrorists are would-be tyrants who hope to rule the world and destroy every trace of freedom. A tyrant is a terrorist in office. Tyrants rule by terror, and maintain their own stable of in-house terrorists called the secret police.

"Our enemies in this war seem varied but share one doctrine. Secular and Islamic fanatics, terrorist tyrants, and tyrannical terrorists *all agree on death*. They believe in and cultivate death; they are the party of death. And we are the party of life—and they hate us for that and hope to destroy us because of it. No war we have ever fought is more fundamental than this.

"Obviously we can't confer life; can't even protect and preserve it—not always. But we do our best. Life comes from God, and we hope to be its champions. We told the world so in 1776; *life*, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the things we stood for. Those words echoed John Winthrop's as he sailed to Boston in 1630. He wrote about the city on a hill he hoped this land would become. He was quoting the Bible, and finished by citing another biblical verse: 'Choose life and live, you and your children!' On those words we set to work and built this great American community.

"We claim no special credit for being the party of life. We invite every person and people in the world to join us. The less exclusive this party, the better. But as champions of life, we have awful responsibilities. We have spent American lives, the dearest thing we have, to sweep away two murderous tyrannies in Afghanistan and Iraq. Two nations once ruled by death now have the chance to choose life. We pray God they take it, and we mean to help them.

"But our enemies believe in death and say so plainly. Almost 30 years ago, Shiite fanatics gathered in Tehran to scream hatred at this nation; they weren't content with 'down with America,' they screamed '*death* to America' and meant it. The secular tyrant Saddam Hussein tortured and slaughtered his enemies and their little children. His terrorist friends believe in the same doctrine, 'murder thy enemy.' The random killing of men, women, and children inspires their supporters to dance in the streets. Fanatic Muslim clerics preach murder in their holy places. And on 9/11, al Qaeda accomplished what even Hitler

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never did: the mass murder of American civilians.

"These proud champions of death kill innocent people all over the world, and their own people at home; they have even discovered new reasons to kill themselves. Suicide murderers are in a rush to reach heaven, which they picture as a discount whorehouse. If that's not sufficiently depraved, behold the ghoulish spectacle of a mother celebrating the death of her own (terrorist) child—a brand new hero by dint of the misery he has inflicted on other mothers and other children. Theirs is the party of death indeed.

"We understand our mission. The champions of life must defeat the champions of death. We must and we will."

I wish the president would say something like this in his State of the Union address. In any case, having written my own speech, I will proceed to write my own commentary.

America the champion of life might sound like a wildly ambitious claim, but it is a fact and (partly) the result of historical accident. The fact shows up plainly when you compare America and Europe. Death shadows Europe's great cities, and some of her great ceremonies, because Europe's medieval past is ever-present; and the medieval world (during certain periods) was obsessed with death. We are free of that shadow and have made the most of our freedom.

We honor our dead—but don't inaugurate our presidents in Arlington cemetery. When the Queen of England was crowned in Westminster Abbey, on the other hand, several of her predecessors were buried just a few steps away behind the high altar, or another few steps beyond that in Henry VII's chapel. The Lincoln Memorial celebrates the man's life; Lincoln is not buried there, nor is Washington at his shrine or Jefferson at his or FDR at his. There are shrines in central London too—Edward the Confessor's in Westminster Abbey is the most famous. Edward is buried there.

There is nothing ghoulish or depressing about Westminster Abbey. It might easily be the most magnificent building in the world. It is the heart of England, is breathtakingly rich in art and history—and is stuffed with tombs. Paris, likewise, has the abbey church of Saint Denis on its outskirts, where ancient French kings and heroes are buried, and in the center of the city the Panthéon, with its secular saints like Voltaire, and Les Invalides, with Napoleon's sarcophagus.

Death has no comparable presence in central Washington, or in any great American city. Arlington cemetery is an important and sacred place, but America has nothing remotely like an official burial building for its heroes.

Europe's magnificent architectural patrimony is full of death. England's medieval cathedrals are probably, as a group, the greatest collection of buildings on earth. But in many of the greatest—Winchester, Lincoln, and Wells among others—you will find beautifully maintained "cadaver monuments," where lifelike effigies of distinguished bishops (say) are laid out atop painfully realistic sculptures of their decaying corpses, crawling in some cases with neatly sculpted vermin and worms. America is the champion of life by her own choice—*and* because she has no ancient past in which to glory.

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Arab tyrants and Islamic terrorists are champions of death. Nowadays we often forget the Nazi connections of their predecessors. The Nazis knew all about death—as a political tool, ideological weapon, terrorist maneuver; they reveled in death in their concerted attempt to rule Europe and Asia, annihilate the Jews and thereby kill the world's conscience, and kill God. Their Arab and Islamic successors would prefer to rule the whole world and not just Europe and Asia, but otherwise their program agrees with Hitler's, more or less.

Briefly consider Haj Amin al Husseini, mufti of Jerusalem, as forerunner of Islamic terrorists; and Gamal Abdel Nasser, dictator of Egypt, as forerunner of the secular Arab tyrants. Their Nazi connections suggest that they and their successors are in fact the party of death.

Haj Amin was appointed mufti in 1922. He was bitterly anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist. Jews are "notorious for perfidy and falsification and distortion and cruelty of which the noble Koran provides the strongest testimony against them," he wrote in his memoirs. He was eager to collaborate with the Nazis. In March 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power, he sent congratulations via the German consul in Jerusalem. He endorsed the Nazis' anti-Jewish boycott and promised to work towards the same goal in British Palestine. His penchant for violence and sponsorship of terrorist groups (the "Resistance and Jihad Organization") harmonized perfectly with Nazi methods. The Nazis sent money to the mufti; Arabic translations of *Mein Kampf* became (and remain) big sellers.

In Egypt, the "Young Egypt" party, the "Green Shirts" (like the fascist Black Shirts and Nazi Brown Shirts), was founded in 1933. Its slogan: "Allah, Fatherland, and People." The young Nasser became a member. When he came to power in Egypt, Nasser (according to David Pryce-Jones) became "the first Arab to have created a police state, complete with arrests at dawn, tribunals to pass predetermined sentences, concentration camps and the secret police, and the whole grim and bloody apparatus of control through bureaucratic terror." ("Terror" and "tyrant" go together.) In time he became a classical Nazi-type Jew hater. In a 1964 interview with a German neo-Nazi newspaper, Nasser called the Holocaust a myth and regretted Hitler's defeat. (Remind you of anyone?) His cult of personality rivaled Hitler's and Stalin's.

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In Iraq the fighting is hard but we have achieved something magnificent. We have destroyed a totalitarian tyranny, but not only that: We have made it possible for Iraqis to go to the polls, create a humane government, and choose life. Of course we have more to do. Of course we will stay and do it. Shakespeare wrote, "How poor are they that have not patience." ♦

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Political Science on the Hill

A resolution of the stem cell debate is in sight.

BY YUVAL LEVIN

"It is scandalous that eight years have passed since we have known about stem cell research and the potential to conquer all known maladies, and federal funds have not been available for the research," Pennsylvania senator Arlen Specter told a press conference last week. Specter's comment marks a new peak in the untamed hype of embryonic stem cell research advocates over the past six years—from early claims of imminent cures for Parkinson's and diabetes, through John Edwards's famous assertion that Christopher Reeve would walk again if John Kerry were elected president, to the oft-repeated notion that 110 million Americans are waiting for stem cell therapies, and, now, quite naturally concluding with the promise of universal healing: "All known maladies" will be cured.

The well-known malady of demagoguery, however, continues to plague us, judging by last week's debate on stem cell research in the House of Representatives. On Thursday, the House took up a bill to overturn President Bush's embryonic stem cell funding policy, and for the first time use taxpayer dollars to encourage the destruction of embryos for research. The same bill passed both houses last year, but was rejected by President Bush in the first and so far only veto of his presidency.

Last week's debate offered a familiar mix of tragedy and farce. Genuine and heartfelt stories of suffering and disease, many told by members of Congress on both sides who have clearly wrestled mightily with their consciences, were interspersed with gross misstatements of the facts of stem cell research and the Bush policy, particularly by advocates of looser ethical limits on funding. Tales of a "ban" on the research, of America falling behind, and of cures just around the corner were the order of the day. Behind it all was an implicit sense of urgency, of a desperate need for an infusion of federal dollars right now. Although unfounded in the facts, this air of urgency has been the potent moving force behind the campaign to overturn the Bush policy for nearly six years.

The well-known malady of demagoguery continues to plague us, judging by last week's debate on stem cell research in the House of Representatives.

But this iteration of the debate also carried with it a particular sense of incongruity. Just four days before the House took up the issue, the journal *Nature Biotechnology* published a study showing that cells from amniotic fluid, collected in the course of routine amniocentesis during pregnancy, could have many of the appealing properties of embryonic stem cells, without requiring the destruction of embryos. The study described the cells as "pluripotent," meaning they can be transformed into a wide variety of other cells. "So far, we've been successful with every cell type we've attempted to produce from these stem cells," the study's senior author told the *Los Angeles Times*.

This is just the latest in a growing number of scientific publications showing that pluripotent cells can be produced without destroying human embryos. Some have described methods of chemically reprogramming adult cells to make them pluripotent and others, like this latest study, involved the discovery of more mature cells with abilities previously thought to exist only at the embryonic stage.

There is more going on here than efforts to make "embryo-like" cells in the lab. What we're seeing is a slow overturning of some key assumptions of cell biology, most notably the belief that the versatility of stem cells is a function of their immaturity and, therefore, that the most versatile cells will naturally be found at the earliest stages of human development: the embryonic stage. Working under this assumption, early efforts to produce pluripotent cells without embryos were described as "turning back the clock." But with every new study, it appears increasingly likely that stem cell versatility can be achieved in a number of ways, and may be inherent in numerous kinds of stem cells at various stages of human development. This means not only that these emerging techniques could offer a consensus solution to the stem cell debate, but also that the entire debate has been grounded in false assumptions.

Stem cell researchers seem increasingly aware of this, and those who want particularly to work with embryonic cells have begun to significantly narrow their case. In an interview with the Associated Press last week, George Daley, a stem cell researcher at Harvard, said of the newly reported amniotic stem cells

Yuval Levin is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and senior editor at The New Atlantis *magazine.*

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that "while they are fascinating subjects of study in their own right, they are not a substitute for human embryonic stem cells, which allow scientists to address a host of other interesting questions in early human development."

Interesting questions in early human development may well be worthy of study, but they are a far cry from the promise to conquer all known maladies, and it is hard to imagine that many members of Congress on the fence would find in them an adequate reason to vote for federal funding to support the destruction of human embryos.

To press the point, the White House on Wednesday released a 64-page report, "Advancing Stem Cell Science Without Destroying Human Life," filled with citations to recent studies of ethical stem cell alternatives. Many supporters of the president's policy in the House also cited the newer research in their remarks. So far, though, the changing facts have not made a dent in congressional support for embryo-destructive research. The House passed the bill to overturn the Bush policy by a margin of 253 to 174—well short of the two-thirds needed to override Bush's veto, but precisely the margin one would have predicted by looking at last year's stem cell vote and the election results: no surprises, and essentially no changed minds either way.

The Senate is likely to take up the issue soon, and there, too, the bill is all but certain to pass. But with time, and with more studies showing success with alternative sources of pluripotent cells, the debate may well begin to shift. Increasingly it appears that the aim of the Bush policy—to advance stem cell science without destroying embryos—may be more attainable than anyone (including its architects) imagined in 2001. Stem cell research still won't cure all known maladies, but more and more we are realizing that it can be pursued without eroding America's longstanding regard for human life and dignity. ♦

A Detour Past Congress

What Bush can do for the economy.

BY CESAR CONDA

While the prospects for pro-growth legislation—tax reform, personal retirement accounts, pro-trade deals, and legal reform—may have ended with the election of the new Democratic Congress, there is an array of actions that President Bush could take to help the economy, without having to go through Congress.

To be sure, the situation in Iraq will continue to dominate the president's agenda for the rest of his term. But the economy remains a top concern among voters, despite solid growth and low unemployment. For instance, a December poll by the American Research Group found 7 percent of Americans say that the national economy is getting better, 43 percent say it is staying the same, and 46 percent say it is getting worse.

Fortunately, there are unilateral actions President Bush can take on the economy. Here are five pro-growth measures to start with:

⋆ **Instruct the Treasury Department to index capital gains to inflation.** Since 1913, the Treasury has ignored the effects of inflation when calculating capital gains taxes. As a result, the effective tax rate on real gains is about twice the current rate of nominal gains, according to estimates by the Congressional Budget Office. The failure to index capital gains taxes to inflation punishes individual investors by reducing their real returns and discourages long-term investing.

Former Reagan Assistant Attorney General Charles Cooper has long argued that because Congress left undefined the term "cost" in the capital gains section of the tax code, Treasury has the power to issue a regulation changing the definition of "cost" from nominal dollars to inflation-adjusted dollars. Granted, this would be a highly unorthodox move. But if the Congress objects, it can pass a bill to prohibit indexing.

⋆ **Revive the presidential task force on regulatory relief.** All too often, the cost of government regulation on the economy outweighs the purported benefits. According to economist Mark Crain, the cost of regulation in 2005 was $1.127 trillion, exceeding the $894 billion in taxes paid by individuals and $266 billion paid by corporations. Under the Bush administration, the number of Federal Register pages—the depository of all proposed and final regulations—increased from 64,438 in 2001 to 73,870 in 2005.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan issued an executive order establishing the Task Force on Regulatory Relief, chaired by Vice President George Bush, to oversee the regulatory process and establish an appeals mechanism if agencies disagreed with the Office of Management and Budget's regulatory relief proposals. The Reagan-Bush task force was a success: Federal Register pages were cut from 57,736 in 1981 to 50,616 in 1988.

High level White House clout is the key to getting agencies to conduct more rigorous cost-benefit analyses and to actually reduce excessive regulation. President Bush should revive the regulatory relief task force that his father once chaired, because cutting costly regulations amounts to cutting hidden

Cesar Conda, former domestic policy adviser to Vice President Cheney, is a senior fellow of FreedomWorks and a Policy Council member of the Free Enterprise Fund.

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taxes on the economy.

*** Withdraw IRS regulation on bank deposit interest reporting.** Three days before the Clinton administration left office, the Internal Revenue Service proposed a regulation that would require U.S. banks to report the interest they pay to all foreigners with bank accounts in this country, despite the fact that Congress deliberately has chosen not to tax deposit interest paid to foreigners in order to attract capital (according to the latest Treasury data, foreigners have more than $3.5 trillion in U.S. financial institutions). The supposed goal of this rule was to catch U.S. citizens who classify themselves as foreigners in order to avoid taxation. But there has been no evidence of such tax avoidance; it is more likely the Clinton administration wanted to help foreign governments track—and tax—flight capital.

Michael Ramirez

If approved, this proposed regulation would cause money to leave the U.S. economy to other nations that would roll out the red carpet to welcome this capital. A study from the Mercatus Center estimates that $87 billion of deposits would flee. Withdrawing this regulation would send a signal to the world's investors that the Bush administration welcomes capital to our shores and supports the notion of tax competition between nations.

*** Reduce trade barriers.** Bush should mount an aggressive pro-free trade offensive to counter the new Democratic Congress's protectionist leanings. Generally speaking, the president is limited in what he can do to reduce trade barriers without congressional approval. One exception is the "anti-dumping" law designed to shield certain industries from imports. According to Dan Griswold of the Cato Institute, we currently have about 300 outstanding anti-dumping orders against specific imports, especially steel. The president has the authority to instigate what are called "changed circumstances reviews" that can result in orders being lifted.

Another related idea: The administration could declare China a "market economy," which would mean lower anti-dumping duties on cases brought against Chinese imports. As a political salve, market economy status would allow domestic producers to bring countervailing duty cases against Chinese imports allegedly subsidized by the government.

Finally, let's not forget about Cuba. Because of his rapidly deteriorating health, Fidel Castro is unlikely to govern Cuba again. Once Castro's grip ends, the president has the discretion, through the Treasury, to relax restrictions on travel, remittances, and so forth. Bush can promote more trade with a free Cuba unilaterally.

*** Provide relief from Sarbanes-Oxley.** The Sarbanes-Oxley Act, passed in response to corporate scandals, has imposed $35 billion in compliance costs on American firms, and imposed about $1 trillion in direct and opportunity costs on the U.S. economy, according to economist Ivy Xiying Zhang of the University of Rochester.

In particular, Section 404 of the act requiring corporate executives to certify internal controls has forced management and corporate board members to spend more time on accounting issues and less time expanding their businesses. Fortunately, the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, an organization set up by the act, has issued a proposed rule to soften the Section 404 provisions. The administration should move quickly to finalize this rule.

To be sure, many of these moves will produce the usual howls of indignation about an "imperial presidency" from the Democrats. However, these bold actions would put the president on the political offensive—and on the side of ending the unfair inflation tax on people's investments, reducing the hidden tax of regulation, expanding global markets, and reducing excessive costs on American entrepreneurs.

Further, these actions provide a stark contrast to a pro-tax, pro-regulation, protectionist Democratic Congress. Besides, with 57 percent of the public disapproving of President Bush's handling of the economy, what does he have to lose? ♦

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One Good Turn Deserves Another

Let's help Ethiopia bring Mengistu to justice.

BY JAMES KIRCHIK

Whatever the wisdom of executing Saddam Hussein, it was a foregone conclusion that the man who had tyrannized Iraq for nearly three decades would eventually meet the fate he did. Once Coalition soldiers found Saddam cowering in that spider hole in December 2003, there was little thought that a new Iraqi government, composed of the very people he had terrorized, would allow him to survive. Indeed, amid the violence that has engulfed Iraq since the 2003 invasion, it seemed perverse that the deposed dictator, of all people, should have kept on living as long as he did.

But as Saddam swung from the gallows on December 30, another ousted tyrant—who probably killed many more of his subjects than the Butcher of Baghdad, and over a shorter span of time—remained free. Though convicted of genocide after a 12-year trial, and no longer in control of any country or armed forces, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991, is living in comfort in Zimbabwe. The international community should have him brought to justice.

Many human rights organizations and foreign governments deem Mengistu the worst dictator in the history of the African continent. In the late 1970s, the Communist tyrant launched what he called the "Red Terror" against all opponents, real or perceived. Tens of thousands were killed. It became a regular occurrence in Mengistu's Ethiopia to see corpses hanging from street poles in the morning. In the 1980s, he helped orchestrate and prolong the devastating Tigray famine that took an estimated one million lives. It was for these and other sundry crimes that Mengistu became known as the "Pol Pot of Africa."

Ousted from power in 1991, Mengistu managed to escape to Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe, who has ruled that country since 1980, has protected him ever since. While millions of Zimbabweans starve as a result of Mugabe's reckless farm-seizure policies, Mengistu resides in a mansion and is afforded government security, luxury cars, and a stipend. He is said to be a security adviser to Mugabe, and rumored to have offered his expert advice on human immiseration to his host's 2005 "Operation Wipe Out Trash," the politically motivated slum-clearance plan that left some 700,000 people homeless.

Mengistu

Credit

Despite the Ethiopian government's repeated requests for Mengistu's extradition, Mugabe has refused, citing his fellow tyrant's support for Zimbabwean rebels in their 1970s civil war against the white-ruled government of what was then Rhodesia. But on December 12, an Ethiopian court found Mengistu guilty, in absentia, of genocide. Last week the court sentenced him to life in prison.

The international community cannot expect cooperation from Mugabe, who has repeatedly shown his disregard for human rights, freedom of the press, and private property. But the situation presents a challenge for Mugabe's African neighbors: How will they deal with this former liberation leader who has gone horribly bad? For years, African leaders have ignored entreaties from Zimbabwean exiles to pressure Mugabe to step down; apparently these leaders prefer a mistaken "stability" (which has produced the world's largest refugee crisis, mass starvation, and civil unrest) to the rule of law.

To be sure, America's history with Mengistu complicates matters. In 1991, in an attempt to stave off a massive and potentially destabilizing civil war in Ethiopia, Washington helped arrange Mengistu's escape to Zimbabwe. But 15 years have passed since that flight, and Robert Mugabe is no longer a friend of the United States and the West. He has quit the British Commonwealth and snubbed the Western democracies at their every insistence that he help his starving people or allow outsiders to do so unimpeded.

That Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have no extradition treaty would not prevent the latter's returning Mengistu to his home country if Mugabe wanted to; in fact, there is precedent for this. Charles Taylor, the former ruler of Liberia, sought refuge in Nigeria in 2003. The government there offered him asylum in hopes this would quell the Liberian civil war—but with the express understanding that a new Liberian government could request Taylor's extradition after two years even though the countries had no formal treaty.

At Congress's initiative, the United

James Kirchick is assistant to the editor in chief of the New Republic. *He reported from Zimbabwe for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD *in August.*

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States offered a $2 million reward for Taylor's capture and secured a U.N. Security Council resolution freezing his assets. Interpol gave governments the right to arrest him. Taylor tried to escape to Cameroon but was captured by Nigerian authorities and is now in the dock at The Hague. There is no good reason the United States and the international community cannot apply the same screws to Mugabe and Mengistu that they did to Taylor.

At a time when America's global popularity stands at a low ebb, the United States still enjoys much goodwill in Africa. By spiriting Mengistu out of Zimbabwe, Washington could improve its credibility as a foe of tyrants and champion of human rights.

When I traveled to Zimbabwe in August, everyone I spoke with had favorable impressions of the United States, and even hopes that America would effect positive change in their country. (Zimbabweans have given up on South Africa, which has supported Mugabe to the hilt.) Several impoverished people expressed gratitude for America's attempts to subvert Mugabe's manipulation of Western food aid.

And another indication of untapped pro-American sentiment in Africa came just last week: the Somalian president's strong statement in support of U.S. airstrikes on suspected al Qaeda targets in his country.

The Ethiopian government did the West a great service in December by defeating the Islamist insurgents (with possible links to al Qaeda) who had seized the Somali capital, Mogadishu, in June. Thanks to the Ethiopian intervention, Somalia—with its geostrategically critical location on the horn of Africa—has a potentially capable government in place, with Western support, for the first time since 1991. The United States, which was humiliated by its 1993 humanitarian intervention in Somalia, owes Ethiopia a debt of gratitude. Doing whatever we can to get Mengistu Haile Mariam out of Zimbabwe and into the hands of his countrymen would be a fitting reward. ♦

First Lady of Intelligence

Roberta Wohlstetter, 1912-2007

BY ROBERT ZARATE

Time & Life Pictures / Getty Images

1985 Medal of Honor ceremony: Reagan with the Wohlstetters (left) and Paul Nitze

One might be tempted to think of Roberta Morgan Wohlstetter as simply the wife of the late nuclear strategist Albert Wohlstetter. However, it would be just as accurate to think of Albert as Roberta's husband—she did, after all, get him a job in 1951 at a relatively new defense think tank where she worked called the RAND Corporation. In the following decade there, both would do work that continues profoundly to influence thinking about intelligence and nuclear war.

At RAND, the Wohlstetters leveraged their diverse educational backgrounds—Albert had studied mathematical logic, law (briefly), economics, and the philosophy of science, and Roberta, English literature, law (briefly), and criminal psychology—to tackle the nascent nuclear age's most pressing strategic puzzles. Working with a number of sharp-minded colleagues, they transformed the way national security types think and talk—with concepts like "first-strike" and "second-strike" nuclear capability, "signal-to-noise ratio" in intelligence analysis, "fail-safe" bomber operation, and "hardened" missile silos.

Their research helped inspire the Swiss-born political scientist Fred Iklé to design a way of preventing the accidental and unintentional use of

Robert Zarate, a research fellow at the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center in Washington, D.C., is writing a book on Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter.

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nuclear weapons ("permissive action links"), and a Hungarian-born engineer named Paul Baran to think of more survivable ways of communicating information ("hot-potato routing," known today as "packet-switching," and "distributed networking"—the building blocks of the Internet). For all this, and a host of other things they did after they left RAND in the early 1960s, Albert and Roberta were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Ronald Reagan in 1985.

Although a lot has been written on Albert, comparatively little attention has been paid to Roberta, who died on January 6 at the age of 94. Her best-known work is *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (1962), a Bancroft Prize-winning study of the U.S. intelligence failures that preceded Imperial Japan's surprise attack. Through interviews and a careful examination of the historical record (e.g., 39 volumes of congressional hearings on the attack), she concluded that American forces were so completely surprised on December 7, 1941, not because of some dark conspiracy by the Roosevelt administration to drag the United States into World War II—but because U.S. military intelligence analysts and decision-makers, despite the best of intentions, had collectively failed to distinguish the few, faint warning signals from the much larger, louder mass of background noise. Only in retrospect, she stressed, were all the disparate dots so easy to connect.

Published at a time when the Soviet-American nuclear competition was intensifying, *Warning and Decision* concluded by offering lessons—in retrospect, enduring lessons—about the uses and sober limits of intelligence analysis against the threat of surprise attack. "We cannot *count* on strategic warning. We *might* get it, and we might be able to take useful preparatory actions that would be impossible without it," Wohlstetter wrote. But "if we accept the fact that the signal picture for impending attacks is almost sure to be ambiguous, we shall prearrange actions that are right and feasible in response to ambiguous signals, including signs of attack that might be false." In the aftermath of 9/11, Roberta Wohlstetter's insights in *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* have become all too relevant.

Roberta's concern about the need for intermediate responses to ambiguous warnings dovetailed with her and her husband's work on stemming nuclear proliferation. Indeed, governments rarely acquire the capability to build nuclear weapons in one fell swoop, but rather quietly and cumulatively, as India's surprise 1974 detonation of a nuclear explosive device demonstrated. (As the United States now prepares to finalize a controversial nuclear cooperation deal with India, American policymakers would be wise to revisit *The Buddha Smiles: Absent-Minded Peaceful Aid and the Indian Bomb*, Roberta's 1977 history of U.S.-India nuclear cooperation.)

In the mid-1970s, the Wohlstetters and their colleagues completed *Moving Towards Life in a Nuclear Armed Crowd?*, a 400-page study for the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that drew attention to the growing "Damoclean overhang" of virtual nuclear-weapon states that the international spread of fissile material and nuclear fuel-making would encourage. In response, this study (later published as *Swords from Plowshares*) called for concerted efforts by the U.S. government to assure the security of America's non-nuclear-armed allies, to strengthen nuclear export controls at home and abroad, and to promote a clearer and more sustainable interpretation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and related agreements in which "close approach to the manufacture of [nuclear] weapons" by non-nuclear-weapon NPT states would be counted unambiguously as "a violation." On this last point, the intransigent cases of Iran and nuclear-armed North Korea—both of which, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), refused to comply with their NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations—come to mind.

For much of the 20th century, national security strategy was a male-dominated field. Roberta Wohlstetter proved to be a glaring—and brilliant—exception. Her published and unpublished writings continue to speak directly to many key challenges facing the United States in this age of increasing disorder. It's high time we rediscovered their wisdom. ♦

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Hillary's War

The loneliness of the long-distance front-runner

By Matthew Continetti

"You know, I find myself, as I often do, in the somewhat lonely middle."
—Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton in the January 27, 2007, New Yorker

New York senator Hillary Rodham Clinton remains the most hawkish prospective candidate in the race for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Among the major Democrats who have announced or are about to announce their candidacies, only Sen. Clinton has not clearly repudiated her October 10, 2002, vote authorizing the use of force against Saddam Hussein. And although Clinton opposes Bush's proposed increase of American combat troops deployed in Iraq, and has called for the "phased redeployment" of some troops from Iraq in order to foster a political settlement that might end sectarian killing there, such positions still leave her to the right of the antiwar left and most other Democrats.

Unlike Illinois senator Barack Obama and former vice president Al Gore, Sen. Clinton supported regime change in 2002. Unlike Delaware senator Joseph Biden, Clinton has not voiced support for partitioning Iraq along sectarian lines. Unlike former North Carolina senator and 2004 Democratic vice presidential nominee John Edwards, she has neither called for the "immediate" withdrawal of 40,000 troops from Iraq nor said that her initial vote to authorize the conflict was a "mistake." And unlike Massachusetts senator and 2004 Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, Clinton rejects setting a date certain for U.S. withdrawal.

Nor are Sen. Clinton's moderately hawkish positions limited to Iraq. At a time when a majority of Democrats say global warming is the most important foreign policy issue facing America, she has said that "the number one problem remains the spread of weapons of mass destruction and those falling into the hands of either rogue nations or borderless terrorists." She has said that an Iranian regime with nuclear weapons would pose a "direct threat" to its neighbors and a "significant threat" to the United States—and while proposing direct talks with Iran "should the right opportunity present itself," she also says that "we have to keep all options on the table" because "U.S. policy must be unequivocal: Iran must not build or acquire nuclear weapons." Meanwhile, Sen. Clinton has called for more U.S. troops to be deployed to Afghanistan and for the Army to be expanded—a position that, until recently, put her to the right of the Bush administration.

It was Bush's decision to change strategy and commit more U.S. resources to the war that altered Washington's politics and Sen. Clinton's presidential calculations. Democrats had hoped to begin 2007 focused on domestic policy and their "100 Hour Agenda." But press accounts containing hints that the president had rejected the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group and was planning to announce a new counterinsurgency strategy involving tens of thousands of additional troops forced the Democrats' hand. Their response came on January 5, when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid sent a letter to President Bush rejecting more troops and stating that it was "time to bring the war to a close."

In December, Reid (and Clinton) had kept open the possibility that he (and she) would support a force "surge" if it was accompanied by a shift in strategy. Now they have closed that door. At week's end the only declared Democratic advocate of Bush's new strategy is Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman—and Lieberman, though he caucuses with the Democrats, is technically an "Independent Democrat." Leaders in both houses plan to hold votes this week on nonbinding resolutions condemning the new Bush policy. Both these resolutions are expected to pass easily.

And Sen. Clinton is expected to join her colleagues in voting for such a resolution. If she does, it will not only illustrate the degree to which congressional and public opinion on Iraq has shifted leftward; it will also be the first in what will most likely become, over the next two years, a series of votes in which Congress battles with the president to influence the course of the war in Iraq. For example, Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts has introduced legislation requiring congressional approval for any increase in troop levels. Democratic congressman John Murtha of Pennsylvania plans to introduce similar legislation in the House. And there will be other attempts to limit and constrain the president's freedom of action.

Matthew Continetti is associate editor at The Weekly Standard.

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It is likely that these votes, combined with the changing situation on the ground in Iraq and in the broader Middle East, will be important in the 2008 presidential primaries.

What effect this will have on Sen. Clinton's chances is unclear. To this point, she and her advisers have run a savvy undeclared campaign based on locking up early support and raising money while preparing for a general election in which the candidate, a polarizing figure, can be cast in a moderate light. The biggest threat to that strategy would be a Democratic primary fought on the left over Iraq. After all, war has derailed presidential frontrunners before. In 1972, Maine senator Edmund Muskie was the clear favorite for the Democratic nomination and a conventional liberal with views considered palatable to a national audience. But antiwar furor over Vietnam spurred left-wing South Dakota senator George McGovern to strong second-place finishes in Iowa and New Hampshire—and ultimately won him the nomination.

Similarly, in the beginning of 2003, John Kerry—who had voted to authorize the use of force against Saddam Hussein—seemed to be the Democratic frontrunner. Then the antiwar Howard Dean took off, dominating fundraising and the polls and threatening Kerry just as McGovern had threatened Muskie. Dean imploded, of course. But that was only after Kerry, in order to prove his dovish credentials, voted against the $87 billion emergency supplemental appropriations bill for reconstruction and combat in Iraq and Afghanistan in October 2003—a vote that helped him win the presidential nomination but surely hurt him in the general election.

Will Hillary Rodham Clinton end up like Muskie? Will she end up like Kerry? Or will she avoid both fates? If the Democrats move to cut off funds for the war in Iraq, where will she stand? Will her myriad tactical shifts on Iraq emerge as a liability? Or will her careful positioning be enough to secure her the nomination while insulating her from attack in a general election? Just where, exactly, has Clinton been on Iraq? And where is she going?

It was October 10, 2002, and Hillary Clinton had a decision to make on Iraq. She had carefully weighed the opinions of her many advisers and strategists and reached the conclusion that the president ought to receive authorization to deal with Saddam Hussein. In a recent interview with the *New Yorker*, Clinton suggested that her respect for the office her husband held for eight years was a main cause for her support. "I have respect for presidential decision-making and I saw what the Republican Congress had done to Bill on a range of issues, denying him the authority to deal with Bosnia and Kosovo and second-guessing him on every imaginable issue," she said. But that wasn't the whole story. In her speech on the Senate floor, Clinton gave a lengthy, detailed, and complex argument for ending the Hussein regime.

The facts, she said, "are not in doubt." Saddam was a "tyrant" who "tortured and killed his own people" and "used chemical weapons on Iraqi Kurds and on Iranians." Once a U.S. ally, Clinton continued, Hussein became an enemy with his 1990 invasion of Kuwait. An American-led coalition had ended the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, but had not ended Saddam's tyranny. Indeed, he went on to antagonize Sen. Clinton's husband, the 42nd president, and ejected U.N. weapons inspectors from Iraq in 1998. "In the four years since the inspectors left," Sen. Clinton said, "intelligence reports show that Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile delivery capability, and his nuclear program." Moreover, he had "given aid, comfort, and sanctuary to terrorists," including "al Qaeda."

To vote to authorize force was "very difficult," Clinton said. In fact it was probably "the hardest decision I have ever had to make." But her vote was cast "with conviction." And a few caveats. Sen. Clinton rejected unilateralism and the doctrine of preemptive war. "If we were to attack Iraq now, alone or with few allies, it would set a precedent that could come back to haunt us," she said. "The best course" would involve "the U.N." But the "authority to use force" was already present. It was "inherent in the original 1991 U.N. resolution," a fact that "President Clinton recognized when he launched Operation Desert Fox in 1998." The bottom line for Saddam was "disarm or be disarmed."

When Bush gave the order to commence the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Sen. Clinton continued to support the intervention. A few days into the war, at a press availability in Syracuse, she counseled patience. "I've never been one of those that thought this was going to be done in 24 [to] 48 hours as some people had suggested," she said. "This is a very difficult undertaking in very treacherous terrain." Americans "just have to stand united and make sure our men and women in uniform know that we're behind them."

By summer, the conflict in Iraq had undergone its first transformation. Saddam's government had been toppled, and Baathist remnants and al Qaeda affiliates had begun their guerrilla war against coalition troops. No weapons of mass destruction had been found. Sen. Clinton began criticizing the Bush administration's intelligence-gathering methods. In June 2003, she told NPR's Juan Williams:

> I want to know, who were we relying on? Who were the people giving us this information? Because this administration has taken a very aggressive posture. You know, they talk about preemption. Therefore, I'm concerned that when I'm given information, it is scrubbed and as accurate

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> as it possibly can be, especially when I see an administration that is willing to go a little further perhaps to pursue what they view as appropriate means to achieve ends that I may or may not agree with.

But the senator would only take this criticism so far. In September 2003, she told a group of reporters that "the intelligence from Bush 1 to Clinton to Bush 2 was consistent" on the question of Saddam's WMD capabilities. And more recently, in the *New Yorker* interview, she said that the Bush administration "believed, as I believed, that there was, at the very least, residual weapons of mass destruction, and whether the Iraqis ever intended to let the inspectors go forward was being answered year by year. There was a lot of evidence that this was not their intention."

Clinton also criticized aspects of Iraqi reconstruction spending and bidding on postwar contracts. She opposed withholding funds, however. In October 2003, Sens. Kerry and Edwards both voted against the $87 billion for reconstruction and combat in the war on terror. Clinton voted for the bill, saying her vote was "for our troops," and "for our mission," but not "for our failed national leadership."

Clinton visited Iraq for the first time that Thanksgiving. In a December 2003 speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, she continued to defend the war. She acknowledged that she had voted to grant Bush the authority to use force and that her decision was controversial. "I have had many disputes and disagreements with the administration over how that authority has been used," she said, "but I stand by the vote to provide the authority." And "I also knew that our military forces would be successful." Clinton said she thought the administration ought to internationalize the occupation of Iraq, which was then governed by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority. She said she thought de-Baathification ought to be less harsh on those "who were Baathists in name only." But her overarching theme was clear: "We have no option but to stay involved and committed."

Sen. Clinton maintained a low profile, especially on Iraq, during the 2004 presidential election. Her website, *clinton.senate.gov*, posts only four "statements and releases" on the war for the entire year. Sen. Clinton's speech to the 2004 Democratic National Convention—she introduced her husband, "the last great Democratic president"—included several mentions of the 9/11 attacks but not a word on Iraq. This is not to say that Clinton avoided all talk of the war. In April 2004, she said on CNN: "No, I don't regret giving the president authority" to topple the Iraqi government, "because at the time it was in the context of weapons of mass destruction, grave threats to the United States, and clearly, Saddam Hussein has been a real problem for the international community for more than a decade."

As the war entered its third year, Clinton remained hawkish. She was thrilled at the turnout in the Iraqi elections. And she recognized the global nature of the war on terror. For example, after the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, she and 10 other senators, including 5 Republicans, called on President Bush to tighten sanctions against the Assad regime in Syria, writing in a letter:

> The Syrians have failed to secure the Iraq border, permitting the infiltration of foreign terrorists into Iraq. Syria continues to harbor leaders who order, plan, and finance terror attacks against Israeli citizens. Operatives of the Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades regularly receive training in Syrian camps. In addition to its sponsorship of terrorism, the government of Syria has ignored and violated multiple U.N. resolutions by refusing to remove its troops from Lebanon. As long as Syria continues to occupy Lebanon and train suicide bombers, the region is not safe.

But the politics of Iraq were slowly changing. The summer of 2005 was bloody. August, one of the war's worst months, witnessed the emergence of "peace mom" Cindy Sheehan, who became a locus of media attention and a surrogate for the antiwar left. Bush's public support, and thus support for the war, were in decline. On October 15, on Michael Moore's website, Sheehan described an encounter she had had with Sens. Clinton and Reid. Sheehan was unimpressed. "After Sen. Reid left, Mrs. Clinton stayed for a few more moments and she told us that she had met with the other Gold Star Mothers who had a different view from ours," Sheehan wrote. "I said it didn't really matter, because our view is right."

In November 2005, Rep. Murtha, who had supported the war, turned against it. A decorated former Marine, Murtha said that the American intervention in Iraq was lost and it was time to bring the troops home as quickly as possible. Clinton rejected Murtha's plan, calling it a "big mistake." But it was clear she felt compelled to address his concerns. She understood the drift of her party with regard to the war. In a "routine communication" to her constituents released on November 29, Clinton outlined her new policy:

> I do not believe that we should allow this to be an open-ended commitment without limits or end. Nor do I believe that we can or should pull out of Iraq immediately. I believe we are at a critical point with the December 15th elections that should, if successful, allow us to start bringing home

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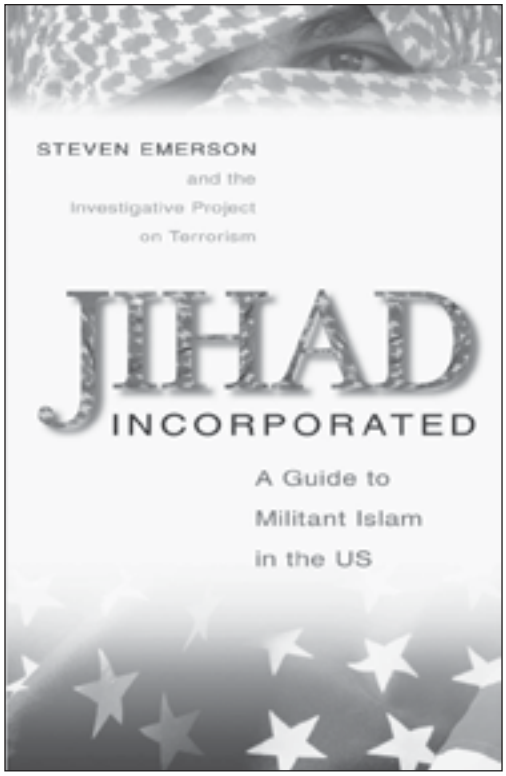
our troops in the coming year, while leaving behind a smaller contingent in safer areas with greater intelligence and quick strike capabilities.

This "routine communication" also marked the first time that Clinton backed away, however slowly, from her initial vote to authorize the use of force against Iraq. The logic of her disavowal was, dare one say, Clintonian. "Based on the information that we have today," she wrote, "Congress never would have been asked to give the president authority to use force against Iraq. And if Congress had been asked, based on what we know now, we never would have agreed." Notably, while Clinton wrote, "I take responsibility for my vote," she did not write that she regretted it. Nor has she ever written or said that.

In 2006, the war in Iraq underwent another transformation, with Shiites beginning to retaliate against the Sunni terrorists who had been killing them for years. Clinton continued to draw criticism for her stance on the war. When she addressed the liberal Campaign for America's Future in June and rejected an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, she was booed. But Clinton's policy was also about to undergo a transformation. Sometime between her letter to constituents in November 2005 and June 21, 2006, Clinton concluded that a military solution to the war in Iraq was not possible and that only American withdrawal—or "phased redeployment"—would spur the Iraqis to reach a political accommodation that would secure their country.

In June, Democratic senator Carl Levin of Michigan, the ranking member on (and now chairman of) the Armed Services Committee, along with fellow Democrat Jack Reed of Rhode Island, introduced an amendment to an appropriations bill calling on President Bush to withdraw at least some troops from Iraq by the end of 2006. Sen. Clinton joined a majority of Democrats in voting for the amendment—while also voting against another measure, sponsored by Sens. Russell Feingold of Wisconsin and John Kerry, that would have required American departure from Iraq to be "substantially complete" by the end of 2007. Speaking in support of the Levin-Reed amendment on the Senate floor, Sen. Clinton called herself a "proud cosponsor," while reiterating her position on the war in general. "I simply do not believe it is a strategy or a solution for the president to continue declaring an open-ended and unconditional commitment," she said. "Nor do I believe it is a solu-



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SO JUST HOW ENTERTAINING IS

Posted last year on ***weeklystandard.com*** by our online editor, Jonathan V. Last:

February 27, 2006: "The Weekly Standard's second annual cruise is now underway. We left from San Diego harbor just after 5:00 p.m. . . . Then, despite the fact that we're in the Pacific Ocean, we switched over to the Mountain time zone, which made Sunday morning a little strange. What made it stranger was the fog. Just after 8:00 a.m., the MS Oosterdam sailed into a thick bank of the stuff. . . . Despite the fog, the seas are calm and flat, with the occasional whale spouting off to port.

OUR THIRD IS JUNE 16–23, 2007

WE'LL LEAVE SEATTLE AND GO NORTH TO ALASKA

WE'RE SAILING ON THE OOSTERDAM AGAIN THIS YEAR!

We started Sunday with a lecture by Fred Barnes, who talked about George W. Bush, the nature of his relationship with official Washington, and the character of his presidency. Lots of deep insights into the mind of the president . . . . Afterwards there were panel discussions on the state of the Republican Party, the prospects for the new Supreme Court, and the future of the blogosphere and the New Media.

WE'LL HAVE AT LEAST SIX OF THESE PANELS

The Oosterdam is a pretty swank ship and the food so far has been top notch. . . . "

CHECK IT OUT AT HOLLANDAMERICA.COM!

IT WAS GREAT THROUGHOUT!

February 28, 2006: "The Oosterdam made port [in Cabo San Lucas] just before 6:00 a.m. on Monday and from our little cove on the Sea of Cortez, you could hear seals barking while squadrons of pelicans circled overhead. A crew of the Standard staff was on one of the first tenders to shore. We rented a Jeep and took off to see Cabo. . . .[We] lunched at a fabulous restaurant in the Old Town section—the best ceviche and fajitas I've ever had . . . .

ONLINE EDITOR LAST, SEEN ABOVE, WILL HOST A SMOKER SCHEDULED FOR OUR ALASKA CRUISE

After the long excursions, dinner on the Oosterdam was, again, fantastic. The Standard cruisers who've been my dinner companions so far have been an amazing bunch—a vascular surgeon, a painter, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur—just to name a few. It's . . . great getting to know each other over good food and good wine (and cheap cigars)."

THINGS SEEN AND FOUND WHILE CRUISING

March 1, 2006: "The Oosterdam was a slow boat to Mexico Monday night, heading south from Cabo San Lucas at a leisurely pace of about 9 knots. We made port Tuesday morning . . . in Mazatlan . . . a small city build around three big hills on a peninsula, which juts out into the Pacific. . . . Mazatlan . . . has two beautiful churches, one of which is the majestic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on a little rise in the center of the city. And today is a good day to be in town: It's Fat Tuesday and the locals are preparing for a blowout Carnival parade complete with costumes, elaborate floats, and stilt-walkers. . . .

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A WEEKLY STANDARD CRUISE?

PHIL IS OUR BOOKS & ARTS EDITOR

Tomorrow we put into Puerto Vallarta and The Weekly Standard programs pick back up with Phil Terzian leading a discussion on Steven Hayward's book on Churchill and Reagan, Greatness."

CRUISERS JOINING US IN SEATTLE WILL GET TO SEE A GIGANTIC WALL OF ICE—THE HUBBARD GLACIER, A MERE 5 MILES IN WIDTH AND 40 STORIES HIGH!

March 2, 2006: "Not content with a program of mere panel discussions, lectures and fruity girl drinks, a group of Standard cruisers met up at 6:30 a.m. on Wednesday to strike out into our final port of call for various adventures. Some people went on hikes, others went swimming with dolphins, others flashed along zip lines on the forest canopy. . . .

MAKE THAT "CHOCK FULL OF"

We're on the two-day journey back to San Diego and the rest of the trip will be heavy with Standard sessions."

BILL ONLY GIVES "GREAT" PRESENTATIONS

March 3, 2006: "Thursday began with a great presentation by Bill Kristol on the state of world affairs, touching on domestic politics, the challenge to a Republican Party that controls both Congress and the White House, the danger posed by Iran, and the fluidity of the post-9/11 world . . . . The afternoon panel was a look ahead to the 2006 election with . . . the general feeling seeming to be not entirely optimistic for Republican chances. Kristol and Barnes both noted that it is not uncommon for a party to have significant losses in the House but to hold fast in the Senate . . . .

NOT SO FAST----

SPECIAL GUESTS THIS YEAR INCLUDE MICHAEL GERSON AND FRED KAGAN

It's been a great week. From Cabo San Lucas to Mazatlan to Puerto Vallarta, all of our destinations made for fun visits. We had long hospitable dinner parties every night and lots of good conversations. . . . These cruises [are] centered around formal presentations and events, but some of the best interactions are the informal ones: bumping into new friends at the gym, or in the lounge, or even on the basketball court.

THEY'RE FINAL! EMAIL US NOW OR CALL 1-800-266-4043. RESERVE YOUR CABIN NOW!

We're finalizing the plans for next year's cruise now and if you send us an email to twscruise@weeklystandard.com with your name and address, we'll let you know all the details so you can have first crack at getting a space onboard . . . ."

2007 CRUISE SCHEDULE

Date	Day	Ports of Call
June 16	Sat.	Seattle, WA
June 17	Sun.	At Sea
June 18	Mon.	Juneau, AK
June 19	Tues.	Hubbard Glacier
June 20	Wed.	Sitka, AK
June 21	Thurs.	Ketchikan, AK
June 22	Fri.	Victoria, BC
June 23	Sat.	Seattle, WA

Bill Kristol, Fred Barnes, Claudia Anderson, Phil Terzian, Jonathan Last, and Terry Eastland invite you to join them on an Alaskan adventure.

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tion or a strategy to set a date certain for withdrawal without regard to the consequences."

Shortly before Election Day, on October 31, Clinton delivered another speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in which she called for a "bipartisan consensus" on foreign policy "executed with nonpartisan competence." Bush's Iraq policy, she said, had reached the point of "complete absurdity." A "fundamental change in course" was necessary for success. First, the Iraqi government should be forced to reach an accommodation between Shiites and Sunnis, including an oil law that would guarantee "every Iraqi a share of the oil revenues." Second, the United States should organize "a public international conference of the parties in the region," including Syria and Iran. And third, the Americans should begin leaving Iraq.

For many Democrats, the November elections only confirmed that the American public had turned against Bush and the war and, like them, wanted U.S. forces home as soon as possible. The lesson Sen. Clinton—reelected with 67 percent of the vote—drew from the election, however, was more nuanced. Last December, in an interview on NBC's *Today* show, host Meredith Vieira asked Clinton why she had not repudiated her vote on Iraq. "Well, you know, obviously, it was wrong to believe this president," Clinton said. "That's tragic to say because people's lives are at stake. He should have let the inspectors do their job."

Vieira jumped in. "But were you wrong to take that vote, to make that vote?"

"Well," Clinton said, "you know, you have to go and look at the situation as we knew it then, and I take responsibility for that vote. Obviously, if we knew then what we know now, there wouldn't have been a vote and I certainly wouldn't have voted that way."

There have been no modifications to Sen. Clinton's announced policy of beginning a "phased redeployment" of troops without a specific timetable for withdrawal. She announced her opposition to Bush's new war strategy quietly, releasing a statement shortly after the president's address to the nation on Wednesday evening, January 10. Then, the next evening, she unexpectedly left on a four-day trip to Iraq and Afghanistan with Indiana senator Evan Bayh and New York congressman John McHugh. That was the very day administration officials were originally scheduled to appear before the Armed Services Committee, on which Sen. Clinton sits, to articulate the Bush policy in more detail. But the hearings were moved to Friday, January 12 at the request of the Pentagon, Clinton aides say—preventing the senator from attending and denying us a clearer sense of where she stands.

No one knows what lies ahead for Iraq. Nor does anyone know Sen. Clinton's next moves with regard to the war. In fact, it is difficult even to know who influences Clinton's foreign policy thinking. Democratic foreign policy wonks questioned last week didn't seem to have a clue. In her October speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Clinton paid a compliment to Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman's book *Ethical Realism*. It's clear that the senator speaks with military brass, including retired Army vice chief of staff Gen. Jack Keane, one of the intellectual godfathers of the Bush troop "surge." It's clear she speaks with members of Bill Clinton's kitchen cabinet including former U.N. ambassador Richard Holbrooke. And she relies heavily on the counsel of her husband, who told *New Yorker* editor David Remnick last year that "it would really be crazy if the antiwar element of our party thought that the most important thing to do was to beat up Democrats, and gave the Republicans a free ride."

What President Clinton had to say about Iraq to Remnick is notable. "I think first of all you've got to remind people that we didn't get into this mess overnight," he said. "And we're not going to get out of it overnight, that we might decide that it's a lost cause and we just have to withdraw in an expeditious fashion. But that whether you were for or against the original action, it would be better if it did not end in calamity and chaos, mass killing within Iraq, more terrorist bases there."

Clinton went on:

> And I think you have to say that this is a national security issue—and I say that because I don't think we should have done it until after the U.N. inspections were over, until we had secured Afghanistan, and we had a consensus in the world community. I never thought Saddam presented any kind of a terrorist threat. But once you break these eggs you've got to kind of make an omelette. And we've just got to be straight about that.

And on:

> And, if it is obvious that there is nothing positive that can come from our committed involvement there, then we have to say we'd be prepared to say we'll come home—but we're not there yet. Seventy percent of those people did vote. They voted to set up this government. And most of them, if left to their own devices without the people with the guns in the middle, would find some way to make some sort of decent go of it.

Simply put, then, the Clintons are "not there yet" on retreat from Iraq. Most of their party, however, *is* there. Which means a central drama of the next two years will be Hillary Clinton's position on Iraq. For four years she has resisted the pull of the antiwar left. If she continues down that path, it may help her in the general election. Or she could end up walking very much alone. ♦

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Rat-Lines and Stakeouts

My life under cover in 1960s San Francisco

By Richard Carlson

The tone of girlish shock that permeated the news coverage of the Hewlett-Packard "spying scandal" was something to behold. Reporters surprised to learn about pretext phone calls? I don't think so. I know about these things. In a much earlier life I was a reporter. I also worked for one of the most successfully sneaky private dicks in America, the king of deception, stings, and wiretapping, the man who invented the transmitter in the martini olive: Harold Lipset.

I met Hal in San Francisco in 1965, and we hit it off over dinner and a bottle of red wine. Hal was in his mid-forties. He had been a private dick all his adult life, beginning as a criminal investigator in the Army in World War II. He had a face like a British bull-dog, round and flat, with a wattled neck and a plop of curly hair on top. He was well read and charming, a widower, as homely as a cement berm but a big hit with the ladies.

Had I ever done any surveillance, Hal asked? I *had* done a little over the past two years, I told him. My news partner, Lance Brisson, and I regularly tracked one weird person or another in real or imagined pursuit of news.

Hal asked if Lance and I would like to do some surveillances and an occasional investigation for him. He'd pay by the hour and match our *Time* magazine stringing fee—we always had side jobs—which was a hefty $10 an hour. He didn't have any specific cases in mind. Stand by, he said, I'll call you when I have something interesting.

Lance and I were the "investigative team" for KGO-TV, the ABC-owned station in San Francisco. Our evening news show, hosted by our boss, Roger Grimsby, was wildly popular with the local audience. KGO was famous for a lack of decorum and taste.

KGO had been tipped that a popular San Francisco state assemblyman, a buffoonish character named Charlie Myers, was being accused of petty graft. Myers's chief deputy had testified to a grand jury that Charlie had used state funds to pay $250 a month to his family babysitter, had "phantom employees" whose salaries he kept for himself, and had settled a campaign public relations bill with $300 in taxpayer-owned postage stamps.

The aide's name was Bob Visnick. He was in St. Francis Hospital with a broken hip and leg. Visnick had been on the losing side of an argument in Mike's Pool Hall. When he fled the building a few steps ahead of a fellow trying to brain him with a pool cue, he ran into North Beach traffic and was hit by a city bus, or maybe a taxi—I can't recall.

Lance and I visited the hospital room where he lay in traction. Visnick refused to be interviewed on camera but otherwise blabbed at length about Charlie Myers's alleged crookery.

Lance and I promised Visnick we would come back the next night after the news show and bring Roger Grimsby to meet him. Roger was a Bay Area celebrity. Visnick was pleased. We went to Hal Lipset and borrowed some bugging equipment, a small wireless mike, a Fargo transmitter, and a reel-to-reel recorder.

Lance Brisson was my cohort at KGO News. For a couple of years we supplied almost all of KGO's (and sometimes the ABC network's) blood and guts stories.

In the course of shooting film of weird and violent people, including at the Watts riots in L.A., the student riots in Berkeley, the draft riots in Oakland, the race riots in San Francisco's Fillmore and Hunters Point Districts, hippie riots in Haight-Ashbury, and dozens of drug raids, murders, shootings, "love-ins," "be-ins," arsons, horrendous rapes, and a documentary on prostitution for ABC called *The Streetwalkers*, we had been shot at a half-dozen times, crashed into the ocean in a helicopter off Point Reyes, been punched, threatened with knives and a sickle, bitten, kicked, and hit with boards and kitchen appliances, chair legs, bricks, and bottles.

Hal Lipset's office and home was a four-story, 25-room

Richard Carlson is an occasional contributor to The Weekly Standard.

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Victorian mansion at the top of San Francisco's Pacific Heights. Hal had made a lot of dough from snooping, particularly wiretapping. Hal's office (and his wire and tape room) was on the main floor. A rabbit warren of rooms and a squad-bay in the basement were where operatives typed reports or hung out. Two locked rooms contained Hal's broad collection of uniforms and disguises: mailman, security guard, waiter, dozens of conventioneer's badges ("Hi, I'm Kurt."), etc. Telephone linemen's pole-climbing equipment and hard-hats for wire-tapping forays hung from hooks. (Hal was the model for the Coppola film *The Conversation* and once owned his own Pacific Telephone truck.)

Hal Lipset's obit in the *New York Times* said he hired many intellectual operatives. I don't know about that. I must have been out the day the intellectuals arrived. But the detectives who worked for Hal were a clever group, and ballsy, and I liked them.

Patrick Buckman, a former San Francisco cop, was one of the more interesting of them. Pat was tall and muscular, a spiffy dresser in dark pinstripe suits and starched white shirts with large monogrammed French cuffs and huge gold links. Everything about Pat was big, he even had big teeth. He looked like Damon Runyon's idea of a successful race track habitué. Pat was friendly and outgoing, and he was a natural intriguer and adventurer. His police partner, Sergeant Sal Polani, was himself a hard case, which would be useful since he was on his way to San Quentin Prison.

Pat and Sal had been arrested in the spring of 1965 with two European safe crackers outside of Sally Stanford's imposing Pacific Heights mansion, two blocks from Lipset's house. Sally was a seasoned tax-evader. She had been running fancy San Francisco whorehouses for 40 years and now owned the lucrative Valhalla restaurant on Sausalito's waterfront, named after her finest San Francisco bordello.

Sgt. Polani and Officer Buckman believed the large walk-in safe at her Pacific Heights home was crammed with cash, claimed the authorities. They said the policemen had enlisted the aid of the two professional burglars to crack Sally's old-fashioned vault.

San Francisco police had been tipped off and were waiting. When cops with shotguns leaped from a closet in the darkened mansion, surprising Polani and the two burglars at Sally's safe, the three intruders bolted for the front door. Inspector Tom Fitzpatrick, head of Police Intelligence, ran up the walk, caught Polani by the throat, and, pulling his own pistol back, accidentally shot Polani in the face. Pat Buckman was grabbed on the sidewalk. The DA claimed he was serving as a lookout and had planned to accompany the safecrackers after the heist to make sure the money was divided evenly. Pat denied everything and said he just happened to be in the neighborhood.

Polani survived the shooting and was convicted, along with the safe crackers, and sentenced to San Quentin. Buckman, who claimed he didn't know what was going on, was acquitted.

What saved Pat with the jury was a question he had asked loudly of the wounded Sgt. Polani at the moment they were grabbed by police. It was: "Sal, what did you get me into?" I believe he said it twice. Polani had just lost a mouthful of teeth and wasn't answering. But all the milling, excited cops had heard Buckman, including the brass, Inspector Tom Fitzpatrick and the deputy chief, Al Nelder; and after Pat's lawyer put them on the stand to testify under oath as to what Buckman had said—a phrase happily characterized by the lawyer as "a reaction only an innocent man would make"—the jury set Pat free.

There was no money in the safe anyway. It had been emptied of valuables and held just three mason jars of strawberry jam, stewed by Sally's maid.

Pat never said whether he was guilty of the Sally Sanford heist. Lance and I didn't ask.

Hal once said to me, as part of a general PI tutorial, "When you plan something, first set your rat-lines." When I looked confused, he said, "Figure out how you're going to get *off the ship* before you get *on board.*" He then explained that he had once been arrested for bugging a hotel room in New York City. He was convicted but avoided publicity after paying a fine. "But, I shouldn't have been caught at all. No rat-lines. That's what I'm talking about," he said. He offered Pat Buckman as an example. Hal thought Pat's "life-saving" statement in front of the cops who arrested him was a "great rat-line," meaning he figured Pat had thought it up ahead of time in case he needed it. I didn't know whether that was true, but, if it was, Pat was a clever fellow.

On some of the cases with Hal, I could only guess about the end game. None of your business, Hal would sometimes say if I asked. I once was assigned by Hal to tail a fellow when he left the Palace Hotel downtown in the morning, follow him, and photograph him. I never found out what it was for.

The man was due out of the New Montgomery Street entrance of the hotel around 9 A.M. An hour before, I perched at a table in the extruding window of the coffee shop across the narrow street from the Palace. I had my Nikon with a big telephoto lens, the guy's name, age, and description, and an 8 x 10 color portrait that I figured came from either his wife or his business partner, whichever was the paying client.

The trouble with surveillance based on one photograph

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is that everybody you see starts looking very much like your man, in this case a fellow named Larry. When my guy actually came through the revolving doors, after being preceded one at a time by a troupe of doppelgängers, I recognized him immediately—Hey, it's Larry.

The fact that he had his arm tightly around the waist of a pretty blonde about 30 confirmed in my head that his wife was the client, unless, of course, the blonde was his business partner's daughter. You could never be sure about these things. I photographed Larry, click, click, click, as he stood at the curb and kissed the girl full on the mouth. It was a lengthy smooch and looked postcoital to me.

AP/Wide World Photos

Lance Brisson and Dick Carlson at the Hunters Point race riot, during gunfire, 1966

When the valet brought the girl's car, I pulled a tight shot of its California license plate. Hal would get the owner's name and address with one phone call. His source, a Marin County sheriff's sergeant, who soon became *our* source, charged Hal a couple of dollars for vehicle registrations, a few more for copies of driver's licenses, and $5 to $10 a copy for criminal records and mug shots, depending on the sergeant's mood—all payable on a monthly bill. Lance and I used the man for a while but soon developed enough SFPD sources of our own to obtain these useful services free.

I watched Larry hail a cab. I caught up with it and followed him over to Fisherman's Wharf, where he checked into the Villa Roma, a garish, completely circular hotel.

I walked straight to the desk clerk, a guy about my own age. I came around the end of the counter and shook the clerk's damp hand. I'm a detective, I said. I'm following that fellow you just checked in, and I need to talk with you. I wish I could tell you what it's about, I whispered, but I can't. It *is* a matter of importance, and you can help me. I'll give you $5 to tell me what room the guy just went to. I palmed him the bill, though no one else was around. The clerk took it; he was hooked. He responded with a room number in a whisper. I said, there's another $10 in this for you if you write down the phone number of every outgoing call he makes, and another $10 if you listen to those calls and take notes of what is talked about.

I shook his hand again, always important. I was learning that most people will help you if you just ask them. Beyond that, many folks are natural-born snitches, willing to tell on someone else to a stranger.

By noon, sitting in a chair in the lobby, I had watched three different single women and two men take the elevator up. I followed each of them until they got off on a floor other than Larry's. The last woman, middle aged with auburn hair and glasses, wearing a pants suit, got off on his floor. She knocked on Larry's door, and I heard him greet her by name—"Frances"—as he opened it. Hal liked to give his clients details and times, no matter how mundane.

I walked past the room, picked up a paper match from the floor where it had fallen when the door had opened, and reinserted it into the door hinge at ankle level, where I had put it after the clerk gave me the room number. I kept the match there so periodically I could check to see if anyone had opened the door while I was in the lobby.

I could hear voices inside the room. I dropped to my knees and pushed my small pocket mirror into the carpet along the bottom of the door. By tilting it I could see Larry's stocking feet. He was sitting on the edge of the bed. I could see the woman's feet as well. She was sitting in an upholstered chair near the bed.

I returned to the lobby and changed my vantage point. I went into the bar. Sitting on a stool, I could watch the

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elevator doors behind me in the mirror. I read a newspaper and talked to the bartender. I could hear the elevator doors ding, so I was watching when Larry and his friend Frances stepped off.

The two headed in my direction, walked into the bar, and, of twenty empty stools, picked the ones next to mine. Frances sat down next to me. They were immediately chatty, and Larry bought my next beer. It was more than a little disconcerting.

They were open and friendly and kind of innocent in their own way. (Although Old Horn Dog Larry never said anything about the young blonde at the Palace Hotel, who by then I had decided was probably an escort service hooker.)

Larry introduced Frances as his girlfriend, off and on, he said bluntly, for about twenty years. They had gone to high school together, and their romance had been rekindled a few years back at a high school reunion. Larry and Frances were a goldmine of info.

I was glad Larry was having so much fun because his life was going to fast turn into a drek-storm when Mrs. Larry, if that's who the client was, got the report and photos.

But I was being paid to watch Larry and take pictures, not become his buddy and then encourage his friendliness to betray him. I decided not to tell Hal I had talked with them or even give him Frances's name.

Lance and I went back to visit Bob Visnick, Assemblyman Myers's chief deputy and principal accuser, in the hospital. We took Grimsby with us as promised.

We also took Hal's Fargo bugging equipment. I clipped a wireless mike under Roger's rep-stripe tie before we left the car. The point was to get Visnick on tape with his charges against Charlie Myers, as legal backup for any KGO stories.

Visnick was propped in bed in his tiny room, his leg suspended from the overhead by pulleys and wires. We introduced Grimsby and perched him on the edge of Visnick's rack. We had told Roger to sit as close as he could so the hidden mike would pick up Visnick's voice. Lance pulled a chair alongside. I bowed out, to go down to the cafeteria for coffee, I said.

We had scouted the area, looking for a safe spot for the bulky reel-to-reel recorder and Fargo receiver. Next to Visnick's room was a narrow closet with a sign on the door that said "Bed Pans Only." It was empty except for a steel machine, about five feet high, against the back wall. On it was an ID plate which said, "Auto-Clave—The Best Bed Pan Flusher, Washer & Sterilizer." I am not making this up; there are worlds out there about which we know nothing.

I went in and closed the closet door. There was an electrical outlet, and I set up the recorder at the base of the machine. I donned the earphones and checked sound levels. On my haunches, facing the machine, I could hear Grimsby pretty clearly, but his necktie was muffling Visnick a bit.

Suddenly, the door opened behind me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a white shoe. A nurse was standing there. I looked straight up and watched her pull down the long handle of the autoclave, almost to the top of my head. She slammed a steel bedpan into the machine's maw and threw back the handle, locking it, and then opened a big valve. Even with my earphones, I could hear the hissing rush of steam and watched it bubble from the rubber seals of the machine.

I didn't know what to do so I just squatted like any other weirdo in a ratty trench coat and earphones would, a four-foot antenna sticking straight up from the mass of equipment at my feet. The nurse remained for endless minutes. I waited motionless until she removed the pan and reset the machine. Her shoes disappeared and she was gone. I pictured her running down the hall screaming for the guards.

I jammed the receiver and the rest of the stuff in the leather bag. I was out of the closet. I scribbled a note to Lance warning him of the nurse and stepped into Visnick's room.

Visnick and Grimsby were on the bed talking about Charlie Myers. I walked quietly towards the chair where Lance was sitting, the note in one hand, the valise in the other. As I approached the bed a buzz began from Grimsby's necktie and turned into an electronic scream as I stepped closer and feedback sprang from the receiver in the valise and erupted from his shirt front. I back-peddled and it receded.

"My God, what was that?" said Visnick. "I have no idea," said Grimsby. "It came from your tie," said Visnick. "I don't think so," said Grimsby, "I think it came from the window," and he pointed at it, as if that would make it so. "I'm sure of it," Grimsby added for reinforcement. "Some kind of alarm system out there I imagine."

Visnick nodded like this made sense. He seemed to accept what Grimsby said and settled back on his nest of pillows, mollified. The power of celebrity at work, I thought.

We used Hal, or Hal and his gear, more successfully at other times. A fellow we knew, an amateur numismatist, had been approached by a man who offered to sell him a 1913 liberty head nickel for $50,000. The price was a tad low since there were only five known specimens in the world and four of them were accounted for. If this fellow had one it would be worth a

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million dollars or more, not $50,000. Hal Lipset ran a police-record check on the seller. He was an ex-con who had done time for white-collar crimes like bad checks and embezzlement.

Our coin collector arranged to meet the seller in a shabby Chinese restaurant, run by a Mexican family, at 18th and Mission Streets.

Al Bullock, a cameraman for KGO, and I were joined by Lipset and two plainclothes detectives, Joe Brodnik and Paul McGoran. We were friends with both of them. We had helped make them famous in the Bay Area—as "Mission Eleven," their SFPD call letters—by filming more than a dozen lengthy stories on their exploits.

Joe Brodnik was about 40, small and wiry. He had been well known in the city as a star high school basketball player, despite his height. Joe coached neighborhood basketball and baseball in the Mission, where he and his wife Jessie and their kids lived. He was very popular. He had been a cop for a dozen years. Paul McGoran was a few years older and big, well over six feet. He was divorced, had four kids, and also lived in the Mission.

Joe Brodnik seldom carried a gun because it aggravated his stomach ulcer, rubbing as it did against his side. He and Paul wore jeans and sports shirts and drove various trucks and old cars. They followed suspected criminals both day and night.

Al Bullock, Hal Lipset, and I knocked on the door of an old lady who lived in a walk-up apartment directly across from the Chinese bistro. She agreed that we could film from her living room window. It had a clear view of the restaurant entrance.

McGoran and Brodnik and two Secret Service agents were sitting in the restaurant near the table under which Hal had clamped a wireless listening device as we ate Chinese-style Huevos Rancheros that morning. Hal had bugged the table because the coin collector was so nervous about being caught wearing a wire.

The numismatist was waiting when the ex-con arrived with the coin. Al Bullock had given our man a ridiculously large magnifying glass with instructions to get the seller out on the sidewalk to check out the coin in the sun—really so we could get a clear shot of them squinting at the altered nickel.

Resisting the magnifier earlier, our man said a real buyer would use an electromagnetic microscope. We pointed out that a real seller and a real buyer wouldn't be meeting in a restaurant that served duck enchiladas and kept its Christmas lights up all year, either.

Hal was recording the restaurant conversation on a canasta table in the apartment. The old lady was clad in flannel pajamas and a hairnet. She was dancing around the room with excitement.

From the front window, Al filmed the coin collector, and then the con man, going into the restaurant, and finally the two of them in front of the place peering into the large Marx Brothers-style magnifying glass; and then throwing up their hands—even our guy threw up his hands, forgetting that he was innocent—when the Secret Service agents stepped out into the sun and collared the con man in time for our evening news. Alteration of money, even a nickel, was a federal crime.

McGoran and Brodnik helped Lance and me with another bugging effort when we were trying to catch a crook named Jesse James, a former heroin addict and current alcoholic who affected both a red beret and the title "Reverend." ("I got my ordination on the streets," he told me.)

James ran a federally funded group called the "Mission Rebels in Action," the most expensive War on Poverty program in San Francisco at the time. It was top-heavy with thugs and rip-off artists.

The San Francisco newspapers lionized "The Reverend," even though most reporters privately acknowledged that James, who had done 16 years in Attica and Sing Sing for violent crimes, was a charlatan. He had recently been arrested for carrying a concealed pistol.

The tip that Jesse James was stealing federal funds to buy a weekend house near Lake Tahoe came to me from a vice cop named Al DeBrunn. James had collected close to one million dollars in federal money in the previous three years, plus as much from foundations.

The detective's estranged wife, Marilyn, worked as a bartender at Augie's Hideaway, a saloon at 19th and Cap Street in the Mission District, a few blocks from the Mission Rebels Headquarters.

Al said Marilyn listened almost daily to Jesse James brag about ripping off federal money as he sat at her bar in the mornings tossing down straight vodkas. I went over and introduced myself to Marilyn. I asked her if she would wear a wire when James came in. She said yes. I borrowed the electronic gear from Hal Lipset.

It was 8 A.M. at Augie's Hideaway, and Lance was sitting at a table gnawing on a pickled egg and peering through the wooden window blinds in case Jesse James showed up early. Marilyn said that James was usually in the place for his first vodka rammer by 9 A.M.

Marilyn tugged at her sweater as she poured me a beer. I had the microphone clipped between her large breasts and had secured the recorder in the small of her back with gaffer's tape. I had run an on/off switch into her pocket.

Joe Brodnik and his partner, Paul McGoran, came in. Jesse James didn't know them. But they knew Marilyn

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and had offered to sit at the bar separately and watch over her in case there was any trouble with James. Lance and I took off.

Joe Brodnik called me later that day. Jesse James had arrived at 9 A.M. He was already drunk. He took a table with some henchmen and ignored Marilyn, leaving after a couple of drinks. Marilyn had gone home but would return for the late shift if I needed the equipment back.

Lance and I showed up at closing time, 2 A.M. Marilyn apologized for not getting James on tape.

"I did learn something interesting this afternoon," she said. "A police sergeant named Mackin came in. He said he needed to talk with me in private. We could have dancing without a license if we pay him $200 a month plus a case of booze. I said okay. He is coming back Saturday night late for his first payment and the liquor."

Marilyn, I said, Would you be willing to tape him?

"Oh," she said, "I already did. I have it all on tape." We listened, and Sgt. Mackin and his extortion demands were as clear as a bell, a bell that would save Jesse James from immediate pursuit.

A few nights later, as a light snow fell, Marilyn DeBrunn and Sgt. Jack Mackin came out of Augie's back door and got into her car, which was now wired for sound.

Deputy Chief of Police Al Nelder and a captain from Internal Affairs were crouched a few feet away in a dark stairwell. Two plainclothesmen from Internal Affairs were hiding behind a dumpster in the alley. When Mackin stepped from the car they pounced on him. He had the marked money in his coat pocket. A portable ultraviolet light turned his hands purple. He slumped to his knees in despair as we filmed him being handcuffed.

Hal Lipset had left-wing political sympathies. He got some work from an old Stalinist lawyer named Charles Garry, the "chief counsel" and propagandist for the Black Panther party. Garry was a loud, obnoxious man who became emotionally involved with his clients, many of whom were very creepy. (Rev. Jim Jones of Jonestown fame was one of them.)

Garry's slavish devotion to Huey P. Newton, a drug addict and multiple-murderer whose heroic public image was a media creation, was thoroughly weird and, I thought, homoerotic. (Buggery was not foreign to Huey, who, according to David Horowitz, had forcibly sodomized Bobby Seale in front of other Panthers after Seale kept annoying him.)

On May 1, 1969, I walked out of the federal building in San Francisco. There was a large crowd on the sidewalk in front. It was a demonstration on behalf of Newton. Garry was parading with a bullhorn in the midst of demonstrators. He was trying to get bail for Newton, who had been convicted of manslaughter for killing a young policeman, John Frey, in Oakland, and this was his way of going about it.

The Panthers had brought a busload of black school children, little kids, from Oakland. They were carrying white picket signs with a large red star around a picture of Huey Newton in his beret and waving small copies of *Thoughts of Chairman Mao*, a collection of political inanities popular at the time. TV cameras and reporters were covering it like a blanket. I watched them from my car across the street.

I was driving away when the police radio under the dash jumped to life. A man was screaming. I couldn't understand him. Then he said, "Mission Eleven. A shooting!" It was Paul McGoran. "A policeman has been shot," on Alvarado Street, he shouted repeatedly.

I arrived at 433 Alvarado, in a working class neighborhood in the Mission District, in just a few minutes.

Al Bullock, the cameraman, pulled up behind me with a KGO reporter named Steve Huss. I saw McGoran's white Dodge truck at the curb. Police cars were parked in different directions on the street, lights flashing. Cops with guns were running around. Paul McGoran was on a gurney, being loaded into an ambulance. His face and head were covered with blood, his jaw was broken, and his front teeth were gone. I thought he had been shot.

Joe Brodnik was lying on his back on the sidewalk. He was dead. He had a bullet hole over his heart and blood soaked his sports shirt. Police were shooting into the rundown pink stucco house behind him where the killers were believed to be holed up. A helicopter was hovering above. A heavy young neighborhood woman ran up and threw a striped bedspread over Joe's body.

Joe Brodnik and Paul McGoran had spotted a half-dozen young Latin men carrying TVs and furniture into the Alvarado house. The stuff had been taken in a burglary in the Sunset District. As Paul and Joe talked with the men, one of them grabbed McGoran's long-barreled revolver from his waistband and clubbed McGoran in the face with its butt, breaking his jaw and knocking him to the ground. The man then shot Joe directly in the heart with a big .41 caliber magnum bullet. He died instantly. Joe had left his own gun, wrapped in a towel, beneath the seat in their truck. The men fled.

After the men were captured—some of them had kidnapped and held a young couple before robbing them in a town south of San Francisco—Charles Garry and other leftist lawyers took up their case with burning zeal, turning it into a cause and a political platform. They titled the suspects "Los Siete de La Raza," and propelled the

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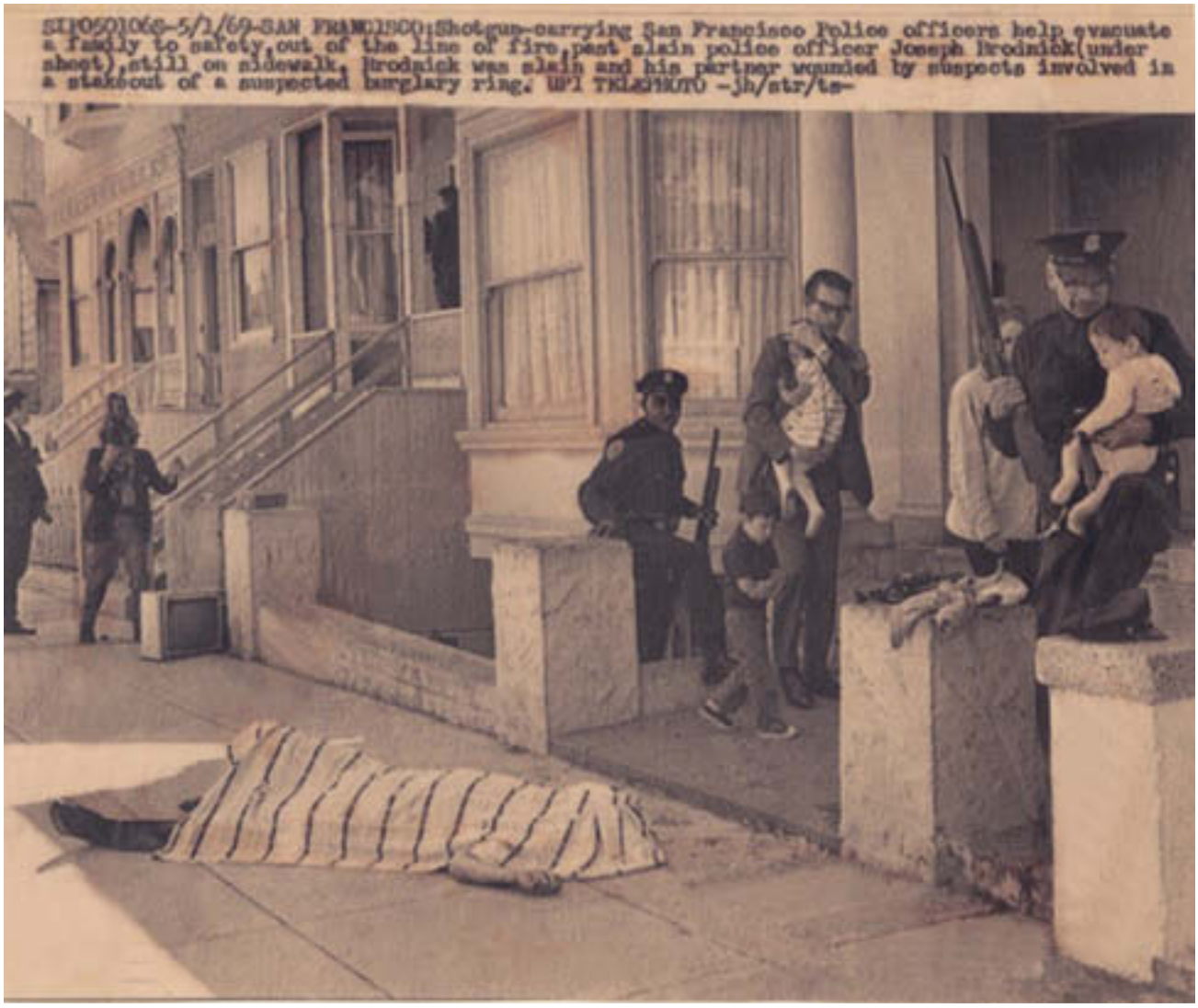

Murdered San Francisco policeman Joe Brodnik

phrase "Free Los Siete" into daily media use, first locally and then nationally. Garry had the Black Panthers and their newspaper join the media fray.

The Free Los Siete crowd galvanized Bay Area liberals and leftists. They marched and demonstrated, held dozens of news conferences, always with Charles Garry at the center, and raised much money, some of it by extorting Mission District businesses with threats of violence.

The defense turned Joe Brodnik and Paul McGoran into racist bullies by hammering the theme daily in the media. They claimed that somehow McGoran had injured himself and then had shot his partner, Joe, in the confusion while he and Joe, the two "racist cops," were trying to intimidate and brutalize the innocent Latino boys.

Demonstrators paraded outside of Joe Brodnik's house, while his children cowered inside. They spray painted "Free Los Siete" on McGoran's house and on Jessie Brodnik's garage. When a Mission District citizens' group planted a tree with a memorial plaque to Joe, the plaque was defaced and the tree was cut down. When a new one was planted, the same thing happened to it.

Charles Garry hired Hal Lipset to work on the case. I went to Hal and tried to dissuade him. No luck.

Hal even used Pat Buckman to dig up a bitter ex-wife of McGoran's who came to court to talk about how awful her former husband actually was.

The jury later said they never believed Paul McGoran had shot Joe Brodnik. But they couldn't decide which of the suspects had done it, so they acquitted them all.

My friendship with Hal Lipset was destroyed.

I moved to Los Angeles to head the ABC investigative unit.

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I did see Hal again. I was in San Francisco in 1974, up from L.A. for a couple of months, covering the Patty Hearst kidnapping. Hal and I ran into each other one night at Enrico Banducci's café on Broadway in North Beach.

Hal came over and sat down. We had dinner. I was still mad at him about Joe Brodnik; about the smearing of Joe's name, the harassment of his widow and family, and the shameful acquittal of his killers.

Hal was unapologetic. It was the business he was in, he said; he was a detective and he worked for the fellow who paid the bills, even if it was someone I didn't like—meaning Charles Garry. I knew it was more than that, but I finally let it go.

Hal had his own problems. The previous year he had been named chief investigator of the Senate Watergate Committee. Now, he had been publicly fired when the White House and the press learned about his old New York State wiretapping conviction.

I reminded Hal of his rat-line advice. You didn't always apply it to yourself, you once told me.

"Sometimes the cobbler's kids don't have shoes," he said. "I've thought a lot about rat-lines and your friend Joe Brodnik. If he hadn't left his gun under the seat of his truck and faced all those guys without it, he might be alive today, and some of those Los Siete people would be dead, not him."

Coda

The martini olive with the toothpick transmitter? If the gin didn't short it out, there was always the fear someone might pull it from the glass, bite down, and maybe electrocute their lips. It was only a con job for the press and Congress.

Joe Brodnik would be 77 years old. His son Bob is now an SFPD homicide detective.

Jessie Brodnik, Joe's widow, had a rough time after the killing and spent years estranged from her family.

Paul McGoran retired from the SFPD after the trial. In 1971, he became a partner with former KGO reporter Steve Huss in a home-remodeling business. Paul died of a heart attack in 1987. He was 61 years old.

Al Bullock is 84 years old and still an active TV cameraman. He films fishing shows. His friend from KGO, Steve Huss, was visiting Al at his home in Belmont, California, last year when he fell to the floor with a heart attack. Al called 911. Then he grabbed his TV news camera and taped the medics and firemen arriving, as they worked on Steve, and when the ambulance hauled Steve away. Steve died. "My neighbors seemed upset by it, but, hell, I figured it was news, and Steve would have thought it was great!" said Al. Spoken like a true KGO alum.

Charles Garry died in Berkeley in 1991. He was 82 years old.

Pat Buckman gained international fame as a private detective for his skill in retrieving American children who had been kidnapped and taken abroad by noncustodial parents, usually fathers, often to the Mideast.

Sgt. Sal Polani became a delivery boy for a pharmacy after his release from San Quentin. I saw him one day. He had recently taken a package of medicine to Sally Stanford's house. She had answered the door. He stood there as she signed for the medicine. She didn't recognize him.

Sally Stanford, whose real name was Mabel Busby, became mayor of Sausalito in 1976. She died of a heart attack six years later. She was 78. Among other enthusiasms, she had been an ardent supporter of the Marin County Little League.

Hal Lipset died of cancer at age 78 in 1997.

Marilyn, the brave woman who helped catch Sgt. Mackin, was walking to her car a few weeks after Mackin's trial (he was sentenced to San Quentin) when she was confronted by a large man wearing a mask and carrying a baseball bat. He threw a blanket over her and beat her to the ground. She was badly hurt. I visited her in the hospital. She told me that as the man began striking her, he said, "This is for Sgt. Mackin, you bitch." The man was never caught.

Jesse James beat the concealed weapons charge. He claimed he was carrying the revolver to City Hall to turn it in under the "Mayor's Gun Amnesty Program." James was soon forced out of the Mission Rebels. He worked repairing office equipment and as a security guard for many years. He died of pneumonia in San Francisco in the summer of 2005. He was 76 years old.

The men of Los Siete dispersed and faded away. One returned to his native El Salvador, another is a day laborer; one, Danilo Melendez, was sentenced to prison for armed robbery in the mid-70s and was stabbed to death in 1977. Gary Lescallet, who killed Joe Brodnik, according to witnesses, was convicted eight years later of the kidnapping and murder of an elderly school teacher named Edith Jackson and has been serving a life sentence in a California prison since 1979.

Lance Brisson is the CEO of a successful international public affairs company in Los Angeles.

The author of this piece became a U.S. ambassador and director of the Voice of America. He is now vice chairman of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington, D.C. He is writing a book about San Francisco in the sixties. Over the years, he has thrown out a few rat-lines. ♦

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Faith, Hope, and Charity

Who gives to whom, and why

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

Getty Hulton Archive

John D. Rockefeller presents a dime, 1923

Ever since the New Deal, a well-worn piece of equipment in the liberal tool kit of debating points is the notion that liberals are more compassionate than conservatives because they want to raise taxes on the rich in the name of helping the poor.

Conservatives, the liberals insist, are skinflints. Instead of aiding the less fortunate, the left says, right-wingers wallow in wealth. They're Scrooges and Social Darwinists who cheer on the fat cats while kicking away the bottom rungs of the social ladder so that poor people never have a chance to advance.

Leftists, by contrast, believe *they're* the people in America who are the most compassionate. They're so concerned about the poor that they want to raise taxes on the rich to strengthen the safety net.

These liberal shibboleths have been somewhat weakened by the welfare reform legislation of 1996. But it's an easy prediction to say that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi will rally their fellow Democrats this year by railing against the Republicans as misers who want to make the rich richer and the poor more miserable.

How accurate are these arguments? Are liberals more compassionate than conservatives? The answer, says Arthur C. Brooks in this thoughtful and engaging book, is no. All the evidence, he argues, suggests that conservatives are more generous than liberals.

Who Really Cares
The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism: America's Charity Divide—Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why it Matters
by Arthur C. Brooks
Basic Books, 256 pp., $26

Despite the subtitle, *Who Really Cares* is not a book about "compassionate conservatism," if you define this term to be the Bush administration's policies towards aiding faith-based charities. Although Brooks has some thoughtful suggestions about how government can increase giving, he really isn't that concerned about federal policy. Rather, this is a book about what current social science tells us about who gives to charities and why people give.

Brooks, who teaches public administration at Syracuse, brings several formidable skills to his task. He's expert at sorting through dense, well-established social surveys and discovering what research within them is worth writing about. Most of us, after all, don't read the University of Michigan's Panel Study of Income Dynamics or the University of Chicago's General Social Survey for fun. We need interpreters, and Brooks is very good at interpreting the available evidence.

Readers should also be aware that Brooks's argument about conservatives

Martin Morse Wooster, a senior fellow at the Capital Research Center and contributing editor to Philanthropy, *is most recently the author of* Great Philanthropic Mistakes.

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being more charitable comes with one important caveat. There is a strong correlation between religious faith and charity. The more religious you are, the more likely you are to give to charity. (Europe's fading churches, by the way, are one reason Europeans are far less likely to give and to volunteer than Americans are.)

Brooks sees "four forces in American life that are primarily responsible for making Americans charitable. These forces are religion, skepticism about the role of government in economic life, strong families, and personal entrepreneurism."

These beliefs, he contends, aren't just limited to the right. There are plenty of churchgoing liberals with strong marriages who are big givers to charity. "The truth," Brooks writes, "is that conservatives only *tend* to be more religious and charitable than liberals." But Brooks shows that the beliefs held by the most generous Americans are far more likely to be held by the right than by the left.

This tendency towards conservatives being more generous produces some striking findings. One of them is that the redder the state is, the more likely its residents are to be charitable. Twenty-four of the 25 most generous states were red ones (only Maryland was a charitably minded blue state). The five states that gave more than 60 percent of their votes to President Bush in 2004 are ones whose residents give 3.5 percent of their incomes to charity, nearly twice as much per person as residents of the five states (including the District of Columbia) where John Kerry got 60 percent or better. This finding, Brooks reports, occurs even though residents of the deep-blue pro-Kerry states, on average, earned 38 percent *more* per household than their red-state counterparts.

Another interesting point of Brooks's research concerns support for government income redistribution with charitable giving. A 2004 survey conducted by Syracuse University, for example, found that if you took two people who were identical in age, income, education, gender, religion, race, and political views, but whose only disagreement was that one person thought it was the government's job to redistribute income from the rich to the poor while the other thought that income redistribution was none of the state's business, the person who opposed government income redistribution was likely to contribute $267 more to charity each year than the income redistribution advocate.

"In other words," Brooks writes, "people in favor of forced income redistribution are privately less charitable than those who oppose it, regardless of how much money they earn."

Economists, of course, have long known that if the state expands, the private sector shrinks. (They call this process the "public goods crowding-out effect.") Brooks cites an interesting but neglected paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2005 in which economists Jonathan Gruber and Daniel M. Hungerman explored this "crowding-out effect" on charities during the New Deal. They found that while the welfare state between 1933 and 1939 expanded from zero to four percent of the gross domestic product, religious charities shrunk by 30 percent during the same period.

Brooks finds a similar crowding-out process taking place today. Under today's welfare laws, states set the payments under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the principal government welfare program. Tennessee's TANF payments are 61 percent lower than New Hampshire's, but Tennesseans give, on average, 4.3 percent of their incomes, well above the 1.8 percent in New Hampshire. Brooks calculates that if Tennessee raised its welfare payments to New Hampshire's level, charitable giving in Tennessee would fall by 42 percent.

Once Brooks has demolished the notion that conservatives are wealth-hoarding misers who hate poor people, he gets on to the second purpose of his book—getting *everyone* to give more. One way to do that, he argues, is for the left to quit picking on rich people who make big donations. For example, in 2004, the billionaire mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, cut government funding to 800 nonprofits in that city, and supplanted the government funds with $140 million in donations from his personal fortune.

The *New York Times*, of course, thought that Bloomberg gave for cynical reasons. "Mr. Bloomberg's personal wealth has made him a modern-day Medici," wrote *Times* reporters Sam Roberts and Jim Rutenberg, "a role that, some critics say, can also stifle dissent from institutions that have quietly absorbed city budget cuts because they worry that what the mayor gives he can also stop giving."

But wouldn't it be more productive for reporters to honor Mayor Bloomberg for his generosity—and write more positive stories about large donors, particularly those who use their wealth to fund innovative ways to help the poor and struggling?

Of course, you don't have to be named Gates, Buffett, or Bloomberg to give. Brooks shows the unsung heroes of philanthropy are the janitors and clerks who tithe to their church or volunteer at their schools or local homeless shelters. The really rich, Brooks shows, give proportionately more of their incomes, but the working poor are also surprisingly generous givers.

Here government can provide some help. Allowing everyone to deduct charitable donations from their income taxes (instead of the current practice of only allowing those who itemize to deduct) would do a great deal of good.

Some deregulation would also help. For example, suppose you live in New Jersey and want to coach your son's Little League team. The New Jersey Office of Recreation mandates that every volunteer attend a three-hour orientation session "that addresses the perspective of the specific population(s) involved (for example, young, senior, novice, and skilled athletes)." New Jersey law requires that any organization providing such a training program "shall issue a certificate of participation to each participant" who completes the course.

It's perfectably understandable that many potential volunteers might well

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find other things to do when faced with this state-mandated training session. But Brooks uses the anecdote to show how well-meaning bureaucrats issue regulations that discourage voluntarism.

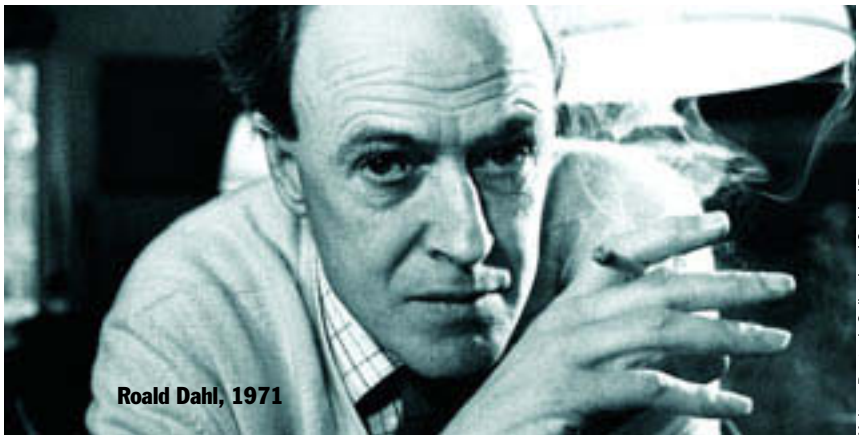
"It seems ridiculously obvious that the government should not suppress charity through bureaucratic rules and procedures," Brooks writes. "Yet this occurs with depressing regularity."

This is a thoughtful look at why Americans give and what can be done to encourage giving. Anyone interested in American charities will learn a great deal from Arthur C. Brooks's important book. ♦

Mister Macabre

The storyteller with a twist, or two.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.



Roald Dahl, 1971

Hulton-Deutsch Collection / Corbis / Dumant

Morning, Doc. Thanks for seeing me on short notice. I have a problem. I can't tell whether it's pathological. That's where you come in.

You know me to be sane, right? I can see you nodding; thanks. I don't torture animals or people. I hate cruelty and I'm certainly no sadist. And I'm not one of those pious imbeciles, either, who believe they're wholly free of the dark impulses that go with our human condition. You're nodding yes, again. I can hear you asking: So, what's the problem?

The problem is Roald Dahl, the man and his stories. Don't laugh, this is serious. And strange. Who is he? A Briton of the World War II generation, born in England of Norwegian parents, died 16 years ago. An RAF pilot in the war, when he began writing about his aviation adventures. Later a widely published and anthologized short-story writer and, of all things, a successful writer of children's stories. Children's stories, if you can believe it! That's part of the strangeness.

Collected Stories
by Roald Dahl
Everyman's Library, 888 pp., $30

Okay, you wish I'd get to the point. I don't understand my embarrassing reaction to Dahl's stories, Doc. I read a lot of fiction and have taught it too, even written a bit; but this guy is *sui generis*—as macabre as Poe, as cruel as Sade, as full of twists as O. Henry, and as artful as Chekhov. If he were clumsy, you'd quit reading in disgust and throw the book across the room. But no—I laugh, Doc, I *laugh.* Often and aloud. And I can't get enough of these stories. Please Doc, can you help?

An example? I can give you several—all you want. "Lamb to the Slaughter," for instance: A woman's husband, a policeman, comes home one night and announces in a surly voice that he's leaving her. She begs to fix him a last meal before he leaves. He grumbles but accepts. She fetches a frozen leg of lamb from the basement freezer and, on a sudden impulse, cracks his head with it. Then she cooks it while his colleagues from the PD are swarming over the house searching for the murder weapon, sure that it has to be heavy and metallic.

Later, she invites them to have a bite of dinner. They sit down to eat, still wondering where the weapon is. "It has to be right under our noses," one says. Hilarious! Then, there's "William and Mary." William is an Oxford philosopher, an unpleasant control freak who tyrannizes his wife. He especially won't let her smoke cigarettes and impounds the grocery money when she breaks the rule. William has his brain and right eye preserved when he dies of cancer. When she goes to see that eye, floating in a basin at the infirmary, she lights up and blows great clouds of smoke right in it. The eye is furious. "I can't wait to get him home," she says. A barrel of laughs!

Bettelheim, you say, Bruno Bettelheim? His book *The Uses of Enchantment*? What about it? You say he insists that fairy tales, even the morbid ones, are healthy for children and that he scolds bowdlerizers for trying to launder the cruelty and morbidity out of them? Are you saying it's healthy to read about Hansel and Gretel burning the witch in the gingerbread house? Or about the Big Bad Wolf dressing in grandma's gown and eating Little Red Riding Hood? Or the stepsisters picking on Cinderella and making her clean the fireplace all the time?

You can't be serious! And yet, I suppose it does explain why Dahl can be also a successful writer of children stories. I shudder to think what they must be like!

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is a former editor and columnist in Washington.

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And you say there's often an intimate connection between depression and humor, that humor of the morbid kind is a "defense" against darkness? And that reading such stories is a bit like the old homeopathic medicine: little drops of poison to ward off the Big Blues? Actually, speaking of depressed humorists, you make me think of James Thurber. Some of Thurber's cartoons, come to consider it, might well be visual Dahl stories. Like "Touché," for instance, where a fencer has just cut off his fencing partner's head. And I can't recall the caption just now, but there's one in which we see a stuffed woman crouched on the mantel and she's identified as a man's first wife. I begin to see your point, Doc. But pardon, I didn't mean to take over the diagnosis.

What other characteristics are there in Dahl's stories? You name it, they're there. The range is vast and the detail is always authentic. This guy knows a lot about everything from surgery to viticulture, from flying to greyhound racing. There is even the occasional touch of magical realism. There's the RAF pilot who disappears for three days, but is seen at night sleeping in his bed and who turns up, finally, having visited a sort of radiant Valhalla beyond the clouds for downed pilots.

Frequently, his characters contrive get-rich-quick schemes, like the geeky inventor of "The Great Automatic Grammatizator," who builds a computer that will gush out instant stories and novels by the dozen and soon drives all the mediocre writers out of business. Or Mr. Botibol who, in one story, imagines that he's Brahms and Beethoven, and in a later one tries to stop the liner he's on in mid-ocean so as to slow the day's sail down and win the captain's betting pool. He jumps overboard, but no one notices. The ship sails on.

So you see, Doc, their little schemes and petty villainies are often thwarted, sometimes hilariously so. Like the two men who poach pheasants by doping them with sleeping powders in raisins, only to have the birds wake up as they're being delivered to the poachers (in a baby carriage!) and fly every which way. Or the vandal housebreaker who accidentally swallows a huge diamond hidden in an ice tray and is found out when its sharp end lodges in his small intestine and has to be removed surgically. Or the wine connoisseur who boasts that he can identify any great wine by taste but is caught cheating when the maid brings him the glasses he's left in the room where the rare Médoc has been breathing.

Yes, I'd say that Dahl's stories are often sadistic. As when a deluded wife fancies that a beautiful stray cat who likes her piano-playing is Franz Liszt reincarnated. When she goes to the kitchen to cook the cat a good meal, her exasperated husband throws the cat into a bonfire in the back yard. Sadistic, I'd say, but not nihilistic. There is often a sort of rough justice. Very rough.

You're looking at your watch. I get it. I don't want to waste your time. What's that? Well, yes, that's an interesting "parting shot," as you call it. You say you don't have to hate sex to like Hamlet, or be a regicide or madly ambitious to admit a grudging admiration for Macbeth, or a jealous husband to see where Othello goes terribly wrong.

Good point! And your diagnosis? I see, Doc: I am a "literary hypochondriac," you say. Interesting term. Did you invent it on the spur of the moment? ♦

Jump Into the Sea

How seven veterans of the Cultural Revolution live in the new China. **BY ELLEN BORK**

In February 1981, an American college student named John Pomfret found himself bunking with seven Chinese men in a cramped dormitory room at Nanjing University. Pomfret, who later became a *Washington Post* correspondent in China and elsewhere, had made his way to Nanjing because it, alone among China's major universities, had begun allowing foreigners to live among Chinese students. Throwing himself into life among his classmates, Pomfret made the most of it, and now he has written an unusual and absorbing book, part memoir, part reporting, in which the lives of several classmates illuminate China's development over the past three decades.

Chinese Lessons
Five Classmates and the Story of the New China
by John Pomfret
Holt, 336 pp., $26

The Cultural Revolution ended a few years before Pomfret arrived, enabling universities to return to normalcy of a kind. However, that political upheaval casts a long shadow over his classmates' prospects and attitudes. For some, "bad class backgrounds" made college admission the longest of shots. Some were forced to denounce their parents. One classmate's parents were killed by Red Guards.

Not all the classmates were victims. Zhou Lianchun, whose story and introspection animate the book, disarmingly owns up to his past. Zhou's Red Guard unit beat "bad elements," destroyed property and religious icons. One of their victims committed suicide, and his sons were forced to dismember their father and distribute the body parts among pig pens. Zhou joined in the daily physical persecution of the woman who raised him. Then they went home together for dinner. "Zhou admitted to

Ellen Bork is deputy executive director of the Project for the New American Century.

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having no pangs of conscience for menacing neighbors, relatives and teachers," Pomfret writes. "'I did what I was told and, being eleven, I liked it' he said. . . . 'You need to understand this,' he lectured at one point, 'to understand where we've come from.'"

With the aid of such friends, Pomfret gets a look behind much of the conventional wisdom about China—such as the notion that Chinese have stronger family values than Americans. "Don't believe the hype," Zhou tells him.

Pomfret struggles to make sense of things he, the son of a Manhattan newspaper executive, can barely imagine. Wu Xiaoqing doesn't balk when, in 2003, he is assigned to write a local history of the Cultural Revolution in Nanjing where his parents, academics, were killed by Red Guards. Pomfret observes:

> There is no word in Chinese for irony, perhaps because the whole structure of society is so infused with incongruity that the Chinese can't see it anymore: a Communist Party that is capitalist; an ancient culture hell-bent on burying its past; a workers' paradise of unparalleled exploitation; a son of political martyrs being told to distort in multiple ways the circumstances leading to his parents' deaths.

Wu bends to the censors, expressing his feelings to Pomfret with one character, *ren*, represented as a dagger on top of a heart, meaning to "endure."

Pomfret observes the toll such contradictions and contortions take, as well as the brave efforts to forge a life among them. His classmates hunger for greater personal freedom, including in their love lives, but they are constrained by ancient mores as well as the arbitrary rule of party officials. Zhou escaped a forced marriage to help a cadre cover up his own extramarital affair, but is pressured to marry a village girl he doesn't love.

Decades later, some controls have been relaxed, but others remain strong. In order to visit his ailing father in China, Song Liming, living in Italy, must take out a newspaper ad renouncing his pro-democracy views. Finally given permission to go home, he adopts a new email address: "yesman."

Pomfret also walks a tightrope.

epa / Corbis / Jackson Lowen

Shanghai shoppers, 2006

While reporting on the demonstrations of 1989, a source, Liu Gang, is arrested and Pomfret is deported after the massacre of protesters on the night of June 3-4. "I had been blithe, naive and careless," he writes. "Liu's imprisonment was an important lesson, which came at a great price; what was worse, the price was not paid by me." Many years later, having written his own carefully worded "self-examination" in order to be readmitted to China as a reporter, Pomfret responds to an enigmatic message inviting him to a reunion with his former source. Like so many who suffered the crushing disappointment of the Tiananmen crackdown, Liu, who was tortured in prison, now has no use for politics, or much else: "Forget the nation, the people, the party, the big issues of the day. It's about me."

For many of this generation, being "about me" means getting in on China's economic growth. Zhou, a teacher of Marxism, finally overcomes his disdain for business to "jump into the sea"—a euphemism for capitalism. The sea Zhou chooses is urine, which a pharmaceutical company in Guangzhou will buy to extract an enzyme used in anti-clotting and gallstone medications. Pomfret's account of Zhou's smelly, audacious enterprise—gathering urine from municipal toilets—is hilarious, pathetic, and includes all the elements of China's economic boom: profits, corruption, cut-throat competition, and environmental degradation.

Pomfret himself has a firm command of irony. Classmate Ye Hao, known as the Big Bluffer for his card-playing prowess (not to mention bulling his way through political correctness sessions) has it made as a party functionary in a wealthy district of Nanjing. In fact, he is a thug. In the cause of property development, he forces out small vendors, sending one to a labor camp, and covers up the criminally negligent death of a stubborn resident who won't vacate a property slated for demolition. His tactics for quashing the Falun Gong are praised and emulated.

One evening, Pomfret joins Ye for dinner in a restaurant displaying the aesthetic excesses of China's nouveau riche:

> From the ceiling hung a massive chandelier of cut glass set into a black base fashioned in the shape of six breasts with golden nipples. . . . Our meal, featuring shark's fin and abalone, was easily worth five hundred dollars though Ye never paid a bill. As we ate, Ye boasted about his will to succeed—for himself and the party. Then the turtle dish came. "Here, I'll help you," he said, yanking the body out of the shell by the head.

Ye Hao may not have a word for irony, but when Pomfret asks him whether he believes that China's economic development will bring about political liberalization and democracy, he scoffs. "So far, it's only made us stronger." It is hard to say whether *Chinese Lessons* is more heartening or disturbing. It is both, as well as a compelling account of a generation coping with China's rapid, often pitiless, change. ♦

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Unfair Harvard

The scandal of admissions to elite universities.

BY BEN WILDAVSKY

As I read Daniel Golden's impressive new book on the many ways in which meritocracy is honored in the breach at the nation's top private universities, I couldn't help wondering what my late brother-in-law would have made of it. A public school graduate whose parents never went to college, he received a bachelor's degree from one of California's premier state schools, went on to work in Washington, D.C., earned a doctorate at night, then forged a successful career at the International Monetary Fund, all without benefit of money, celebrity, or connections of any kind.

The Price of Admission
How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges—and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates
by Daniel Golden
Crown, 336 pp., $25.95

Yet by the time his oldest child was applying to colleges a few years ago, an entire lore had sprung up around elite college admissions, full of tales of string-pulling and preferences based on everything from wealth and race to alumni status and athletic prowess. I recall my brother-in-law's impatience as he observed this process. Had he known more about the practices documented in Golden's compelling brief against admissions breaks for the privileged, I suspect he would have had an even stronger reaction: disgust.

The story Golden tells here is one in which the high-minded rhetoric of first-tier universities, whereby applicants are told that they will be selected on the basis of some elusive but legitimate-sounding combination of academic and extracurricular talents, is compromised not occasionally but all too frequently. Building on, and adding substantially to, a series of articles in the *Wall Street Journal* (for which he won the Pulitzer Prize), Golden, the newspaper's deputy Boston bureau chief, depicts an admissions spoils system that extends far beyond the racial preferences often denounced by conservatives and disliked by most Americans.

Thus, his account of what he terms "nothing less than affirmative action for rich white people" details the preferences given to the children of celebrities and politicians; to development cases (applicants whose wealthy families either have given large sums of money to the college in the past, may plausibly be expected to do so in the future, or both); to legacies (sons and daughters of alumni); to recruited athletes (Golden zeroes in on how Title IX has, improbably, boosted the prospects of young women playing preppy sports such as squash, sailing, crew, fencing, and water polo); and even to the offspring of faculty members.

Golden's chapter-by-chapter catalogue of these preferences makes for fascinating reading. He describes such little known phenomena as Harvard's "Z-list," whereby 25 to 30 well-connected but sub-par candidates are admitted to the insanely competitive university each year on the sole condition that they take a year off before enrolling. He relates Duke's assiduous courting of the children of prospective donors, including two sons of Ralph Lauren, who later made a six-figure donation to the university. Colleges and wealthy families are on the prowl for mutually advantageous deals. Golden reveals the existence of plugged-in "fixers" at top universities, who serve as wranglers and handlers of families with fame, political connections, money, or some combination of the three. ("The code words you use are, 'This is a development family.' . . . Everybody knows what they're buying," the private college counselor hired by the Lauren family told Golden.)

Writing about Brown, which seems to have turned somersaults to enroll celebrity kids—think Amy Carter, the late John F. Kennedy Jr., and the children or stepchildren of Ringo Starr, James Taylor, Marlon Brando, Steven Spielberg, and more—Golden tells a depressing tale of the college's efforts to woo the son of Michael Ovitz, a lackluster candidate who ultimately enrolled as a "special student" and left the university within a year.

His discussion of legacy preference, which he argues "strikes at the heart of American notions of equal opportunity and upward mobility," includes soul-searching quotes from students troubled by the admissions breaks they received. (Their comments, akin to those sometimes heard from black and Hispanic students, struck a chord for me because of my own unease, as an Ivy League undergraduate two decades ago, as to whether my father's grad-school degree from the same institution might have contributed to my admission.)

Golden also recounts some appalling interviews with legacies that suggest old-fashioned snobbery is alive and well even in the *bien-pensant* Ivies: "It's important to Harvard to have people who know what it means to work hard, make good friends, and go out at night. A lot more alumni children are well-rounded kids, probably because they come from more stable families," one daughter of privilege tells Golden, after observing in similarly charming fashion that the college once had "too many Asian American students."

While being clubbable apparently still increases one's chances in the admissions lottery (particularly when legacy status and family money are combined), it doesn't always translate into academic success. At Harvard, for instance, Golden musters

Ben Wildavsky, a senior fellow in research and policy at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and former education editor of U.S. News & World Report, *recently served as a consultant to the federal Commission on the Future of Higher Education.*

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evidence that, in recent years, a disproportionate share of the children of big donors managed to graduate without honors, an especially dubious accomplishment at a school where only one in 10 graduates failed to receive some kind of graduation honor in 2004.

As a body of reporting, *The Price of Admission* is a tour de force. Nobody should underestimate just how difficult it is to pry this sort of concrete information on admissions preferences from colleges and universities that are notoriously thin-skinned about even mild forms of public scrutiny. Golden, himself a Harvard graduate (and a friendly acquaintance of mine from education/journalism circles), has been accused of naiveté and self-righteousness—a *New York Times* reviewer called his book "dishy" and "mean-spirited." But his willingness to name names and to discuss individual students' SAT scores and high-school grades is vital to his account; behind-the-scenes admissions practices have probably never before been documented in such persuasive detail. Indeed, Golden acknowledges ruefully that some readers of his original *Journal* series viewed it not as an exposé but as a roadmap. How much, one magnate asked him, would he need to donate to assure the admission of his academically undistinguished daughter to an Ivy League college?

(For the record, Golden's sources tell him that a sliding scale prevails: A mere $20,000 will draw a second look from a modestly endowed liberal arts college, while families will need to cough up at least $100,000 to get on the radar of a top-25 school, and $250,000 or even a million-plus to crack the top 10. Another key tip: Proposing a direct *quid pro quo* during admissions season is considered gauche; better to take the genteel path and negotiate through an intermediary.)

Still, the biggest weakness of *The Price of Admission* might be that it lacks perspective about the scale of the preferences it critiques. After all, there just aren't that many children of politicians and celebrities applying to college. Nor, despite all we read about the growth in the ranks of the super rich, are "development admits" a significant proportion of the student bodies at elite schools. (Golden estimates their numbers, without citing a source, at 2 to 5 percent.) As Golden notes in his introduction, by far the three largest groups subject to admissions preferences are recruited athletes, legacies, and "underrepresented" minorities, i.e., blacks and Hispanics.

Brown University, 2003

Corbis / Rick Friedman

While he cites useful data throughout the book, it's a shame he didn't do more to wade through the available evidence about how much of a leg-up members of each group typically get, which would have grounded his anecdotes in more systematic analysis. For instance, when former Princeton president and affirmative-action supporter William Bowen studied a group of elite institutions for a book promoting greater socioeconomic diversity in college admissions, he found that recruited athletes enjoyed the biggest admissions advantage, followed closely by minorities and, at a middle distance, by legacies. An applicant whose academic qualifications alone would dictate an admissions probability of 40 percent, for example, could expect to see his or her odds shoot up to 70 percent if a recruited athlete, to 68 percent if black or Hispanic, and to 60 percent if a legacy. (Perhaps Harvard isn't representative; its admissions dean told Golden that the average SAT score of its legacies is only a few points below the school's mean.)

These startling numbers, combined with Golden's passionate opposition to discrimination against Asian Americans in the admissions process, might seem logically to lead to an across-the-board stance against preferences of all kinds. But while Golden expresses ambivalence about racial preferences, a throwaway line in his final chapter declares that it is too soon to jettison them for blacks and Hispanics. And because athletic prowess is not simply a matter of birth but rewards "a candidate's own hard work and excellence," he is willing to preserve an admissions boost in the popular sports that are available to most American children.

So he is left with a scattershot reform platform: no to legacy and donor preferences; no to admissions breaks for squash and polo players; yes to football and basketball scholarships; and yes to racial preferences for blacks and Hispanics. It is hard to see the underlying principle that makes this a coherent package.

Nevertheless, Golden is on to something important, which is why his wide-ranging book deserves to be taken very seriously. The cumulative weight of the legacy, donor, celebrity, and upper-crust-sports preferences he decries is significant. And while those admissions breaks may be perfectly legal, nobody should doubt for a minute that they offend the meritocratic sensibility. (A noteworthy study in conservative contrasts: William F. Buckley Jr., has defended legacy preferences, while former Senator Bob Dole opposes them.)

Critics may say that Golden is guilty of naive idealism. But that is surely preferable to cynical tribalism. And if his case for a more level educational playing field is not always rigorously consistent, it is immensely readable and enlightening—not a bad combination when dealing with a too-little-examined set of practices that can only benefit from more public discussion. ♦

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Make No Whine

The older Orson Welles was productive, not tragic.

BY SONNY BUNCH

The last 40 years have been both kind and unkind to Orson Welles. *Citizen Kane* is widely considered the greatest film of all time: The American Film Institute declared it the greatest American movie, and the British Film Institute's poll of critics has named it tops every 10 years since 1952. A restoration of his noir classic, *Touch of Evil*, was completed to his original specifications in 1998, to near-universal acclaim. Welles conferences have taken place across the globe, from Munich to New Haven.

On the other hand, Welles's life is often cast as that of the wasted genius. Most cruelly, he is compared to his famous creation, Charles Foster Kane. Consider the titles of two well-regarded biographies, both of which allude to *Citizen Kane* in their titles: *Rosebud* and *Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu*. In *Raising Kane*, Pauline Kael's groundbreaking account of the making of *Citizen Kane*, she wrote that Welles "has lived all his life in a cloud of failure because he hasn't lived up to what was unrealistically expected of him. . . . all his actual and considerable achievements looked puny compared to what his destiny was supposed to be."

Welles's reputation may be unfair, but it shouldn't be surprising. For authors, it's an easy story to tell: Welles, the child prodigy who has conquered stage and radio, heads to Hollywood and creates the greatest movie the world has ever seen. After stumbling in his attempts to follow up his masterpiece with another, Welles winds up becoming the image of his most famous character, physically and spiritually. Instead of fading gracefully from the scene, he cashes in, appearing in films of lesser worth like *Transformers: The Movie* and *The Muppet Movie*, and prostituting himself for "modestly priced" wine and fast food.

Joseph McBride, a Welles acolyte and confidant from the director's later days, attempts here to cast his final years in a new light. In addition to providing a more detailed look at Welles's frequently maligned (and more frequently ignored) final works than previous biographers, McBride also attempts to explain Welles's first leave of absence from Hollywood in the late 1940s and early '50s.

What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?
A Portrait of an Independent Career
by Joseph McBride
Kentucky, 344 pp., $29.95

McBride is an accomplished chronicler of figures from the film industry, having written on directors as diverse as John Ford, Steven Spielberg, and Frank Capra. Annoyed with the way previous biographies have treated his mentor, McBride attacks their authors for having an incomplete knowledge of Welles's later *oeuvre* and being preoccupied with his obesity. Instead of lamenting Welles's "wasted genius," McBride chooses "to celebrate all that he did do in Hollywood and elsewhere throughout his long and astonishingly fertile career."

Before doing so, however, the author feels it necessary to explain why Welles went into a self-imposed exile from Hollywood during what should have been one of the most fertile periods of his career. In 1947, Welles fled America for Europe, and didn't return until 1956. It has long been assumed that he did so for reasons related to work—he had acquired a reputation for wild overspending on his films, a reputation McBride succinctly dismantles—and "insurmountable" tax problems (which were substantial, though certainly not insurmountable). Instead, he suggests that Welles skipped the country because he feared being placed on a blacklist.

Here, McBride stumbles. While Welles was undoubtedly a leftist—McBride decries the fact that *Citizen Kane* is not recognized as one of the great anti-fascist films, and highlights Welles's lifelong support for racial equality—he stridently denied that he was ever a member of the Communist party. And the only piece of evidence that McBride is able to furnish to prove Welles had reason to fear the blacklist is his inclusion in "the infamous 'bible' of the blacklist, *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*."

While being named in *Red Channels* might have caused Welles some problems, it certainly wouldn't have meant an automatic blacklisting. Furthermore, Welles publicly stated that he carried no water for the Stalin regime: "I'm sick of being called a Communist," he told the right-wing gossip columnist Hedda Hopper in July 1947. "It's true that I've worked for some of the things the Communist party has advocated. But that was merely coincidental. I'm opposed to any political dictatorship." As McBride points out, "Short of testifying before [the House Committee on Un-American Activities], the most prominent public clearance ritual for a Hollywood figure was to give an interview to Hedda Hopper, one of the ringleaders of the blacklist." McBride also takes note of "Welles' claim that he begged to testify [to HUAC] in order to deny on the record that he was a Communist." And in the FBI file on Welles (reproduced by McBride), it is explicitly noted that the director had "no record of Communist Party membership." This doesn't sound like a man who had reason to live in fear of the blacklist.

More important than this diversion

Sonny Bunch is assistant editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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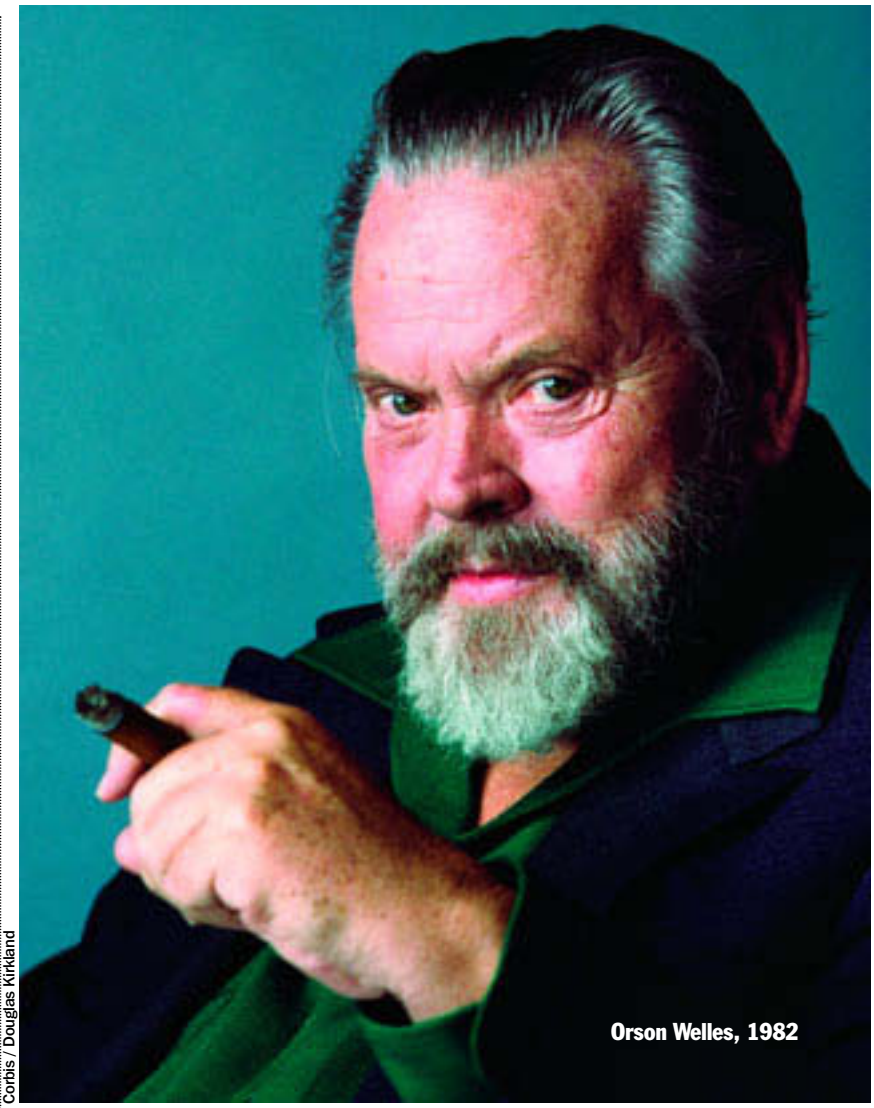
into the world of the early Cold War, however, is McBride's recounting of Welles's later works. Here, he excels. Though his praise is excessive, that may only be expected from a man who dedicated years of his life to acting in Welles's great, unfinished *The Other Side of the Wind.* Welles's professional life was filled with more than a few great, unfinished works. Because of financing problems, he would often run out of money before shooting could be completed—and if shooting *was* completed, it was no sure thing that the footage would ever be edited into viewable form.

This is not to say that every piece languished incomplete. McBride extols the virtues of the freewheeling *F for Fake*, Welles's documentary on forgeries, forgers, and the very nature of art, writing that "*F for Fake* is a particularly brilliant display of what can be achieved with the essay-film format. . . . Welles' dazzlingly edited blend of found footage and newly shot material becomes a meditation on the art of the cinema and the meaning of authorship."

Reviewers, however, savaged *F for Fake*; Stanley Kauffmann said the film "tries the eyes." And while McBride dismisses the critical backlash ("most American reviewers simply didn't get it"), his opinions of the films he writes about cannot be trusted: He was probably too close to his subject to objectively grade the quality of Welles's work. The book is not intended as a critical study of Welles's corpus; it's better read as a picture-to-picture recounting of his waning years.

McBride's greatest contribution here may be unintentional: *What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?* confirms the idea that the filmmaker became more and more like Charles Foster Kane as the years progressed. Consider Welles's penchant for self-financing (and then failing to complete) films while reading this description of Kane from the final act of Welles's masterpiece: "He never finished [construction on his mansion, Xanadu]—*he never finished anything*. . . . He was disappointed in the world, so he built one of his own—an absolute monarchy." (Emphasis added.)



Corbis / Douglas Kirkland

Orson Welles, 1982

Welles also mirrored Kane's propensity for monstrous behavior toward those closest to him: McBride's many anecdotes reveal a man embittered at a world that had rejected him, and angry at the success granted those close to him, such as his protégé Peter Bogdanovich. In one particularly nasty scene, Welles tells visitors to Bogdanovich's Bel-Air home—which the younger director had loaned Welles while he was in Europe shooting a film—that "Peter just sits around like an old man who can't get it up anymore."

McBride, too, was the target of Welles's scorn. While planning a salute to John Huston, McBride asked Welles if they could get together to discuss what Welles would say at the ceremony. McBride didn't want the speakers' remarks to overlap, but Welles misunderstood, bristling at the suggestion he needed help writing a simple speech: "There's nothing to talk about," he declared, "because *I'm* going to write it." McBride never had another conversation with Welles, and writes that "by not wanting to see him, I was guilty of a form of betrayal, like the betrayals of friendship in so many of his films."

This book may be seen as McBride's atonement, and he does a good job dispelling the myth that Orson Welles spent his last years indulging his own gluttonous impulses and doing little else with his time. As Pauline Kael said of Welles's legacy, "In a less confused world, his glory would be greater than his guilt." ♦

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Mexican Gothic

Two new films from Hollywood's Three Amigos.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

When it comes to immigration, Hollywood is an open borders kind of place. But I suspect even those creative folks in the motion picture business who think America should declare Spanish its official language are bristling a little these days at the directorial invasion from the South. That giant sucking sound you hear is the blissful oxygen of American critical praise being drawn away from American directors and filling the lungs instead of three Mexican directors who are the darlings of the present moment. They've been dubbed "the Three Amigos," and while that ethnic joke would ordinarily be the cause of protests by Hispanic-sensitivity groups, the directors themselves seem delighted by it, and so the Three Amigos they are and will always be.

Pan's Labyrinth
Directed by Guillermo Del Toro

Children of Men
Directed by Alfonso Cuarón

Amigo Numero Uno is Alejandro González Iñárritu, the auteur responsible for *Babel*, the titanically depressing triptych I dubbed "the Feel Bad Movie of the Millennium" a couple of months ago in these pages. Amigos Dos and Tres are Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo Del Toro, who have both labored successfully in Hollywood vineyards even as they have continued directing smaller and more personal movies in Spanish. Cuarón made several much-admired smaller films before hitting the jackpot with an assignment to helm *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the third and best of that blockbuster series. Del Toro has scored at the box office with lower-brow fare like the vampire flick *Blade 2* and the comic-book adaptation *Hellboy*.

Cuarón has just made a $75 million end-of-the-world movie called *Children of Men* while serving as a producer on *Pan's Labyrinth*, an exceedingly grim fairy tale set in 1944 Spain written and directed by Del Toro. *Children of Men* and *Pan's Labyrinth* both opened in New York and Los Angeles during the last week of 2006, delivering moviegoers a potent uno-dos punch of doom and death—Mexican mordancy amid Christmas cheer. The critics went bananas. A "glorious bummer," said Manohla Dargis of the *New York Times* about *Children of Men*. Scott went even wilder for *Pan's Labyrinth*, saying it "has the feel of something permanent."

Scott's words were echoed across the critical landscape. The National Society of Film Critics has named *Pan's Labyrinth* the year's best movie, foreshadowing its likely victory as Best Foreign Film on Oscar night in March. And it's beginning to seem plausible that *Children of Men* will zoom in out of nowhere to take an Academy Award nomination for best picture—perhaps snatching that nod from *Babel*, which has been on the Oscar short list for months even though hardly anybody actually likes it. Doubtless, the question you're asking is: Can the amigo-ship of *Babel*'s González Iñárritu and *Children*'s Cuarón survive the Year of the Three Amigos?

Fine. You're not really asking that. You're really asking whether *Children of Men* and *Pan's Labyrinth* are any good. And the answer to that question is: Yes and no.

Pan's Labyrinth is an almost perfect piece of work, in which every scene is exactly what it should be and where it should be. Del Toro knows what he's doing and gets nothing wrong along the way. He has the kind of control over his storytelling that a novelist has, and his ability to get his ideas from the page to the screen with such meticulous thoroughness is a very rare cinematic accomplishment.

And yet *Pan's Labyrinth* is really a hateful thing—a film that basically tells the story of the psychological torture and eventual murder of an innocent 12-year-old girl with grotesque relish. The girl's name is Ofelia, and she finds herself living in a remote military outpost in Spain with her desperately sick pregnant mother and brutal stepfather. Friendless and isolated as her mother grows ever more ill, she spends her days reading fairy tales—and imagines that an ancient faun visits to tell her that she is actually the lost daughter of the King of the Underworld. She can return home and live forever as a princess, the faun tells her, if she undergoes three tests.

Ofelia's fairy-tale imagination is as bleak as anything in Grimm. She must fetch a key from the innards of a colossal toad that vomits all over her. She must use the key to open a cabinet in a realm controlled by an albino giant that eats children. And she must kidnap her baby brother from her stepfather's lair and bring him to the faun, whose designs on the infant aren't necessarily benign.

Del Toro's point here is that Ofelia is transmuting her horrific existence into imaginative art. She intuitively understands that her innocence is being challenged by the corruption of the world and that her only means of defense is to defeat it in her fantasies. But most of the film is dedicated not to the exploration of Ofelia's fairy tale but to the Fascist violence unleashed by her stepfather as he pursues a Republican rebel remnant of the Spanish civil war. He tortures and kills constantly and without consequence, even shoot-

John Podhoretz, a columnist for the New York Post, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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ing the doctor who must attend to his wife's labor because he discovers the doctor has passed antibiotics to the rebels.

In the course of *Pan's Labyrinth*, Ofelia does not have a single moment of joy, or pleasure, or happiness. Even her fantasy world is a dour, dark, dank place where there is only a hint of a promise of redemption. Only when she is fatally shot by her stepfather can she escape, in the very last moment of consciousness, to the fantasy world she has created—where she becomes a princess of the Dead.

Some critics say Del Toro leaves it open whether Ofelia's fantasy world is real or simply metaphorical. I don't think it's an open question at all. Every indication the film gives us, from its very first image of Ofelia dying from the gunshot, is that Ofelia is seeking an escape, through her imagination, from her real-world torments. Nothing we're seeing is actually happening. And the nihilistic aspect of Del Toro's portrait of childhood misery is that Ofelia cannot even imagine an escape that might involve sunlight. *Pan's Labyrinth* is a work of secret sadism that revels in the abuse of a child even as it appears to be weeping bitter tears over her. In this respect, Del Toro is displaying his comradeship with González Iñárritu and his *Babel*, another film in which children are dragged through Hell so the filmmaker can make us squirm.

Children of Men has, if possible, an even more ghastly premise, borrowed from the English mystery novelist P.D. James's 1992 book of the same name. The world has gone infertile, and as the movie begins, the youngest person on earth has just died at the age of 18. In 50 years, the planet will be left to the animals. James clearly intends *Children of Men* to be a metaphorical exploration of abortion and euthanasia—about mankind's descent into an abyss through its increasing acceptance of planned death. In her imagining, the looming death of mankind leads to a new form of tyranny as a dictatorship springs up in Britain whose entire purpose is making life as orderly as possible while the nation dwindles to nothing.

Sergi Lopez in 'Pan's Labyrinth'

Warner Brothers / Courtesy Everett Collection

Director Cuarón (who is also credited with writing the screenplay along with four others) has no interest in James's morality play. Instead, he twists her social-conservative dystopia into a leftist nightmare vision. His particular bugbears are present-day homeland-security policies and foes of immigration. This makes no sense as metaphor and even less sense as a realistic vision of the future. Who, exactly, would spend their remaining years on a childless Earth enforcing a closed-borders policy? At its climax, *Children of Men* descends into crazed silliness when immigrants imprisoned in a concentration camp and the evil soldiers imprisoning them end up in a Fallujalike street war.

Children of Men is messy and incoherent where *Pan's Labyrinth* is focused and flawless. But even so, it's pretty amazing, and not just because the idea of a world without children has such a haunting power. Cuarón and his team do a magnificent job of capturing the strange ennui that would descend on an infertile planet—a place where people, like the film's protagonist Theo (the wonderfully soulful Clive Owen), would just go through the motions of living. The movie's plot kicks in when Theo is kidnapped by an activist group led by his ex-wife (Julianne Moore).

It turns out her group is harboring the only pregnant woman in the world, an illegal named Kee. They are keeping her existence secret because they fear the dictatorial anti-immigrant government would kill her and the baby. It's a measure of Cuarón's breathless storytelling mastery that you let this preposterous insane-leftist conspiracy theory detail go by very easily. Cuarón films *Children of Men* as a series of astoundingly long takes, with us following Theo as he is drawn into the plot to save Kee. This has the effect of bringing us along as a passenger in the cars which Theo drives, another guest in the houses where he hides, and as a secret conspirator when he needs to change plans.

This intimate approach gives *Children of Men* the immediacy of a home movie, though it is as artificial as any big-budget Hollywood picture. Cuarón's ability to involve the audience so viscerally—which includes the triumphant staging of what may be, without exaggeration, the two greatest car-chase scenes ever filmed—helps *Children of Men* transcend its own silliness and become something unforgettable. *Pan's Labyrinth* may be unforgettable too, but so is a mugging. ♦

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Parody

Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) made waves over the holiday with his appearance on a beach in his home state of Hawaii. **—News item**

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